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# EXISTENTIALISM

*a theory of man*

by  
RALPH HARPER

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*to*  
HUGH WHITNEY

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## P R E F A C E

Existentialism is not part of our classical inheritance. Nor is it peculiar to contemporary civilization. It can trace its lines back to the urgent tones of Biblical Christianity and Judaism, its philosophical analyses to Saint Augustine. Its exasperated rhetoric is at heart religious; as a philosophy it pleads for assent. What we now associate with Sartre and Kierkegaard, as well as with much of the art and thought of the past hundred years, reaffirms the initial article of any Western "first philosophy," a respect for oneself: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

I have wished to make clear what existentialism is, by pointing out what existentialists have in common with each other, and by tracing the main lines of argument of the two varieties of existentialism, the nihilistic and the dynamic. Should my attitude sometimes seem warmer than is thought proper in a critical work, I hope the reader will be reassured by remembering that I am writing as an existentialist, not as a spectator of existentialism. As Karl Jaspers said in 1919 of his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, I should like to say now: "This book makes sense only to people who are beginning to wonder about them-

selves, to reflect on themselves, to see existence as full of questions." Existentialism as a theory claims to have reminded contemporary men and women of a gallery of personal experience which has been closed to their mining for a long time. Existentialism, as a feeling for the person one is, may again be shut off from us, this time by its own theorizing. This is the risk inherent in all speculation.

I have made extensive use of the words of other existentialists so that the reader will have the opportunity to judge for himself the propriety of my own interpretation. This seems to me preferable to the pretense one often encounters of advising the reader of what other people "seem to be saying." Translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

I am very glad to be able to acknowledge heavy debts of schooling to two former teachers: Professor John Wild of Harvard University, for introducing me to classical philosophy as well as to existentialism, and the Very Reverend M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., formerly of Oxford University, for opening up to me the prospect of an existentialism not of nihilism but of love.

RALPH HARPER

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*a theory of man*

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## THE PROBLEM

*We are the first generation in which man has become fully and thoroughly problematic to himself; in which he no longer knows what he essentially is, but at the same time also knows that he does not know.*

*Max Scheler*

Self-knowledge is both form and content of an existential theory of man. As Pascal said, "One must know oneself. If this does not serve to discover truth, it at least serves as a rule of life." But what is it to know oneself? At the beginning of Western philosophy Socrates, too, enjoined men to know themselves. Did he have in mind the self-searching we now call introspection? This has been a matter for controversy. Kierkegaard, for example, took Socrates as his model. Others hold that Socrates, like Thoma

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Aquinas, was simply interested in discovering "our proper place, that is to say, above lower things, and below higher, and this at bottom is the true meaning of the Socratic (Delphic) precept" (Gilson, *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*). Even if one takes the arguments for immortality in the *Phaedo* as symptoms of Socratic existentialism, it is questionable whether he can claim that Socrates' introspection was in general directed at "the man of flesh and bone, the man who is born, suffers, and dies—above all, who dies."<sup>1</sup> Is it not more true to say that dying was for Socrates one more occasion for asking important questions? Socrates, the most individualized of all the Greeks we read of, inquires about the order of being, the nature of the good, the harmony in the soul aspiring to the good. He is contemplative rather than introspective, and even when alone with his conscience (δαίμων), he is not alone as we or even as the Greek poets understand it.<sup>2</sup> And yet while we find ourselves hesitating to define Socratic self-knowledge, in the cases of Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, or Plotinus, we never need raise the question at all. Of them we can glibly assert: Greek philosophy had a theory of man; it had no theory of the person. And where Greeks led, others have followed, so that centuries later Roger Bacon knew well that he was talking philosophical heresy when he challenged the

scholastics: "The singular is more noble than the universal."

In both the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of knowledge—and perhaps consequently in their ethical theories—the accent falls on the broad likenesses which all human beings share. When one has peeled off the common features of humanity what is left over is a formless and therefore unintelligible residue. Why the Greek mind "ran to types," what conditions, geographical, economic, political, impressed this character on Greek reflection, one must inquire into elsewhere. It is enough for us to remark here that introspection as we know it forms no part of our classical heritage. Our own tragic sense is Christian in origin, although our sympathies sometimes incline to atheistic (and therefore Greek) tragedy. The Greek mind, like ours, was split between its philosophic and its religio-tragic biases. The Platonic and Aristotelian views of man which Christian theologians made use of to rationalize belief were, like Christianity (although for quite different reasons), much more optimistic than the pessimism of Sophocles. But the Greek tragic or lyric poet, unlike the philosopher, made no effort to escape from the inner insecurity of human nature; unlike the philosopher, he had to reckon with the isolation of the individual, and with his guilt, suffering, freedom, love, and death. The philosopher's de-

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liberate turning away from passion and pain, above all from an awareness of what it feels like to be alone, has come to be the principal omission and limitation of all Western philosophy. The content of tragedy was as much a scandal to the Greek intellectualist as existentialism is to the academic mind today. The temptation to exhaust reality by universalizing it has been passed through successive inversions of intellectualism down to the present popular varieties of cynicism and relativism. In the end, reason itself has fallen into disrepute, basic insights belong to the individual only and not to the culture, and thinking men find it necessary to clothe even their own ideas in the style of the acceptable past.

One hundred years ago, in opposition to one kind of philosophical relativism, that of Hegel, Kierkegaard referred men back to a starting-point of which they could be certain, their own existence. The very fact that Kierkegaard's preoccupation with the self still seems like an innovation to some—and a waste of time to others—is a symptom of the overwhelming indifference of modern times to self-knowledge. It is easy to forget—and Kierkegaard never forgot this—that he was but one of a long line of Christian witnesses of a respect for the self. Genuine self-knowledge first came into Western civilization through Judaism, and hosts of religious folk in taking the

words of the Psalmist to their hearts have been testifying to a concern for themselves which no Greek philosopher could share. "Save me, O my God." "Hear me when I call, O God." "Give ear to my words, O Lord." "Have mercy upon me, O Lord." No Greek philosopher is praying. One cannot imagine Aristotle groaning, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." No, one can point to no crying of the heart in Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophers wished to be saved by reason; they were not to understand Saint Paul. In the end we are forced to judge them as failing even to define the nature of man. For to ignore the person is to ignore the very ground on which humanity lives, moves, and has its being. And just as one cannot imagine Plato affirming, "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope," so one cannot hear even Socrates confessing with Job, "For I know that my redeemer liveth . . . and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." As we would now say, Socrates could not take his flesh that seriously.

Human nature has not changed. Greeks as well as ourselves could read the mysteries of fate and tragedy, and like ourselves their tragedians despaired of total self-sufficiency. But as Gilson has said, "There are depths in human nature unsuspected by the ancients,

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that make man an unfathomable mystery to himself." Greece had a tragic sense of life in its mysteries, its lyricism, its tragic drama; our own tragic sense of life has come from another source altogether, and is more developed if not more hopeful. Western man has been told (and even if he disbelieves, he is infected) of the possibility of a supernatural salvation more effective (for the whole man, not just his intellect) than salvation by reason. And just because modern man has so much more to gain by hoping for something the Greeks had not been told, he sways from darker depths of despair to blacker disillusion and frustration. Christianity has offered to guarantee the infinite worth of each person—not just humanity—by the appearance on earth of God himself, and by Christ's promises to leave us his gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Even if Christianity is—as many suspect—a sham and a mirage, we can recognize that its promises have been printed into the nerve of our Western attitudes towards life. As long as one can say there may be time and a chance to overcome the seemingly ineradicable tragedy of human life, "the eternal wound of existence," as Nietzsche put it, hope will remain, and inversely, frustration wax more bitter.

Christ's words are to the *me* and *you* of mankind, not to mankind in general. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest" (the sentence Kierkegaard so loved). "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "This is my body which is given for you . . . This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Existentialism is but an outcropping of this distinctly Christian concern for persons. Kierkegaard was witnessing to this when he said that the new thing about Christianity was its paradoxical assumption that the destiny of each person should be of real concern to an eternal being. No other religion or philosophy has valued man so high. Even God's revelation to the Jews was primarily to a people—although for its individuals—through a people, while Christianity was revealed more directly to certain persons by another person, Christ, who appeared among them as a person like themselves—not as a burning bush, but as a carpenter's son. Christianity has thus given man an excuse to hold himself dear.

This concern for persons is exemplified in the disputes of the early Church Fathers about the Persons of God. In these controversies human beings were for the first time in history exploring the nature of personality, human as well as divine. The Christian



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religion is a religion based on infinite personal need, and it is directed towards the fulfillment of that need by a Person. It is obvious, therefore, to an existentially minded reader of such a treatise as Augustine's *On the Trinity* that he is reading a treatise on God's personality in terms which are born of an appreciation of human personality. That Augustine himself emphasizes the likenesses of man's personality to God's is but a recognition of the new interest in Western civilization. And it is Augustine himself, in his *Confessions*, who makes the first analysis in history of the springs of unease and love in the human being. The Psalmist, the Prophets, the Redeemer himself could speak to the individual about his need; now for the first time an individual examines this need. Authentic self-knowledge bursts forth in Augustine. "What then am I, O my God, what nature am I? A life powerfully various and manifold and unmeasurable." "Here are men going afar to marvel at the heights of mountains, yet leaving themselves unnoticed." Not only is man the proper study of mankind, but man as person as well as man the species. For the first time in history a philosopher examines the typically personal features of human life: memory, evil, and time. But this is a new kind of philosopher, a restless one who knows that he is looking

for something Greek philosophy with its sufficiency of reason cannot supply.

Augustine's impulse to explore personality mingled with the stream of Christian piety and mysticism, and we do not see conscious analyses of personality again in the Middle Ages—not even in Thomas Aquinas—which go much beyond the Greek effort to distinguish man from other creatures: intellect triumphs over will, knowledge over love. Memory and time are no longer objects of study, for the human subject as a Christian philosopher once more turned to man the species, not man the person. But Thomas himself, like other philosophers of the Middle Ages, was a mystic as well as a philosopher, and we can respect his final evaluation of his own intellectual monument: "It all looks like straw." The mystical—the existential—side of the Middle Ages we may see in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, that progress report of a soul in trouble. We may hear the inner voice of that long era in the magnificent hymns to the Virgin. Philosophy proper is silent over human contingency, suffering, and love.<sup>3</sup> Only the contemplative and the troubadour fed the heart of the man of flesh and bone.

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth century the philosophers kept an unbroken silence over the human tragedy, and philosophy tramped deeper and deeper.

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into its all-consuming interest in epistemology and logic so necessary for an understanding of the relation of man to the material world he was making so much of. But except for Pascal's reminder in his *Pensées* that the "heart has its reasons which reason does not know," no man philosophized about the heart of man. This man belonged to the priests and evangelists; science had found new targets. Curiously enough, when men stopped philosophizing about themselves, they stopped talking metaphysics, too. Thought became more real than reality, systems and categories than things. As Berdyaev has said in *Solitude and Society*, "Man . . . lost the power of knowing real being . . . lost access to reality and [was] reduced to studying knowledge. One cannot arrive at being—one can only start with it." It is fair to suspect that the access to reality was lost step by step as men lost access to themselves. And today even religion can no longer satisfy a need which the individual himself cannot justify as either very real or very important.

We can now begin to understand why Kierkegaard's favorite contention that "men don't know what it means to exist" has stung some men into self-awakening and has been meaningless to others. To the former Kierkegaard is the mentor honored for a compass direction he set for sensitive contemporaries rather

than for his peculiar religious apologetics. Kierkegaard's aim (at least at the outset) was to tear individuals out of their empty, pretentious, commonplace lives and force them to become self-conscious. Kierkegaard the nineteenth-century gadfly stung to awaken, not to contemplation of the good but to self-awareness.

What is now called existentialism is no longer an isolated phenomenon. In the century which followed Kierkegaard's protest against intellectualism, complacency, and self-hypnosis, many other protests have been made, and a renewal of concern about man's inner nature has made itself felt in novels, poetry, philosophy, and religion. We have only to mention the names of a few of the men and movements which have had the effect of turning men's eyes to their hearts: romanticism, humanism, personalism, the Oxford movement, Neo-Scholasticism, Dialectical Theology; Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Henry James, G. M. Hopkins, Proust, Thomas Mann, E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot. We have only to think of the movie house down the street or the spy story at our bedside to remind ourselves of our own escape from one kind of reality, the tiresome routines of "gracious living," to another, exciting and full, but not always ours. We are uprooted, wandering, searching; we move on the edge of chaos within and without. We are frustrated and insecure and so less immune to the opiates of

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material progress or social success. The script of the times reads, "Annihilation began with the atomic bomb." And yet we go on thirsting for views of fictional human beings threading their lives through needles of disorder and suffering; if they are successful in the end, we may be, too.

Alongside the humanistic surge of modern civilization has raced the full tide of mass brutality, personal greed, terror, hypocrisy, and destruction. Neither the energies released in the renaissance of humanism nor the various technological revolutions have been channeled or converted. Family and community life have become less patient, prudent, and gentle; human freedom has come to mean an avoidance of pain rather than an opportunity for the good; and though we all dream and talk of security as our best-loved want, even this is denied us. Not that there have not been special ideals and formulas for righting the world; wars are, at least, still fought in their names. Men have sometimes been persuaded to revolt for, or put up with, new masters, but utopia is still around the corner. Strength for free, satisfying action has not emerged from the didacticism of the left nor from the opportunism of the right. The one has acted on the principle that most people are "natural slaves"; the other with the excuse, "First come, first served."

Even if the end of our time has not quite come but

is only delayed, we must admit that for the clinical mind, contemporary civilization has already been prepared for a thorough post-mortem. Ours is an age of medicine. Man is on the operating table, naked, ashamed, worried; he faces pathologists rather than surgeons. Very little can be hidden from the philosophical pathologist. Man's nobility as well as his misery is on display. At no time has so much, in general, been known of man, his actions, his powers, his health, and his diseases. At last the time has come for the report on what makes him tick. The patient himself—we cannot yet call him the corpse—is reduced to thinking of life in its lowest, most elemental terms, as a test match between personal freedom and contingent circumstance, and he is now trusting to the sympathy of a fellow patient, the pathologist himself. It has never looked quite like this before.

In no other century can so many persons be pointed out with sensibilities so broad or so tender, but we are at the same time more homeless and more wanting than people in other times. We cannot be satisfied so easily; we know at last how high the stakes are set. We are cynical rather than skeptical; afraid rather than wondering. The "cause for alarm," the "background to danger," are within us, just where Marcus Aurelius so innocently encouraged us to look. But we have come across, not the universal within us, but

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the trembling flicker of a life which is unique in each, irreplaceable when extinguished.

Because man has always been interested in man, "the problem of man," we were sure we had time to stand apart from ourselves and speculate. This careless waste of time exasperated Kierkegaard, who knew better than to treat man from without when he could examine him from within. **I**Man is a being who can know himself. Gabriel Marcel<sup>4</sup> has illuminated this definition with his own distinctions between problem and mystery, having and being.<sup>5</sup> For him a man is a mystery to himself; other things are his problems. **I**

That every man is moved to understand is a truism, but that every man is moved to understand himself is a truth modern philosophy has on the whole neglected. Man is a being who can question himself, and, of all the questions that can matter to him, no question matters more than that of his own status and destiny. Therefore, it is curious to note that although modern philosophy like all modern sciences thrives on subdivisions, it seldom engages in an over-all discussion of the nature of man; it has, in fact, yielded the title "anthropology" to the "social sciences." But the human questioner goes on asking questions about himself, and whether he classifies these questions properly or not, they are both philosophical and, speaking literally, anthropological. What sort of be-

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ing am I? Who am I? These are perennial personal inquiries, and any attempt to answer them, or, in fact, even to state them sympathetically, is an effort at mapping the countryside of "philosophical anthropology." All other inquiries bearing on man's status are at best instruments ministering to this basic human interest.

Of course, one would like to be able to look not only to the great philosophers but to one's contemporaries for such an elementary anthropology; however, one soon discovers that if the words "philosophical anthropology" are but mentioned, he is either accused of misusing the word anthropology, or made to feel that such broad questions are more suitable for literary or religious people than for philosophers. Philosophy as a science has become almost wholly identified with logic and epistemology, and one can hardly blame ontologically minded adults for rejecting it as esoteric and unreal.

Even in neo-scholastic circles, where classical common sense realism has lived on in the medieval tradition of the Catholic Church, the theory of the substantial soul is notably static, not yet having been sufficiently dynamized either through the influence of the tradition's own Christian personalism or by contemporary existentialism. Vital concern about the nature of man, however, may be observed more on the



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fringe of academic philosophy, in anthropology, sociology, political theory, and psychology, and in such thinkers and artists as Chestov, Unamuno, Jaspers, Heidegger, Kafka, Barth, Przywara, Berdyaev, Sartre, and Buber. These have, each in his own way, interiorized our philosophy, fiction, and religion by stressing the personal side of life. Serious philosophical exploration of the nature of man can be found almost exclusively in two quarters: in the *Existenzphilosophie* of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre, and in the neo-scholasticism of Pierre Rousselot and a few others. The little-known Rousselot current of neo-scholasticism has recently become aware of its affinities with the main stream of existentialism, and it is now easier to advance the view that it parallels the main stream than it would have been in Rousselot's lifetime. Rousselot himself merely sought to "interiorize scholasticism," and in doing so he put forth a dynamic theory of love and human energy which seems to supply the crucial insight for the explanation of any existential theory of man. Critics of existentialism have from the beginning challenged sympathizers to justify the use of the word "existential," and beyond repeating, with Heidegger and Sartre, Kierkegaard's insistence that "existence is prior to essence," no explanation has been notably helpful. But in Rousselot's theory of "the two loves" we have

the key to the characteristic dynamism of all existential reflection.

Rousselot's theory is ontological, metaphysical, and although expressed in terms which may be unfamiliar to the nonphilosophical reader, will be generally acceptable because the assumptions of neo-scholastic metaphysics are on the whole the assumptions of common sense. Moreover, the literary-minded reader has become gradually aware of the need for some "ontological" criticism, some sure insights into the nature of personality, to complement the analogical and technical criticisms of the literary scientist. Ontological criticism, however, implies commitments, certainties, even beliefs, and ours is an age of readers rather than assenters. (But the general reader still wants to know what is being said, not just how or who else said it.) Ontological criticism at the present time remains tentative and conjectural, largely because the critic as a rule has no sure theory of his own about the nature of persons against which he can measure what he reads. The best he can do is to report or "criticize." On the other hand, we all know that novelists and poets have to a great extent replaced professional philosophers as explorers of the conditions and conflicts of human existence. And yet, while it is true that an imaginative sense of existence, an "objective correlative," is unquestionably as useful as ontologi-

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cal analysis, there comes a time when one wants to explain as well as feel. At this point the philosopher is responsible for lifting from the art of his time insights embedded in story, metaphor, and emotion. In this sense, poetry serves philosophy.

A new mode of understanding feeling, and living, emerges when a person begins to understand that the fact of his existence is tremendously important to him, and that the fact *that* he is, is quite different from the fact that he is a man, a member of the human race. The contingency of self-being brings to mind another fact; namely, the fact that other beings exist is not the same as that they are beings of such and such a kind. It is precisely this duality and compositeness in human understanding itself which we express in the most elementary way in raising the questions, Who? and What? These have their origin in the sort of being man is; and the nature of man as a whole can be inferred, at least in general, from observation of his most typical interests. The anthropological questions as to *who* and *what* a man is, are the central questions of philosophy—despite the *trahison des clercs* in this respect—and the asking and answering of other questions are simply instrumental. Even the former depend for their very posing on the prior sliver of self-disclosure that presents the self as a new entity to itself.

A man can ask questions; he can ask them about himself. He can in some measure disclose himself to himself. He is, therefore, a being who can step not only outside other things but outside his own self as well. He can look at himself. This is an explanation for what we mean when we say he "exists," for to exist means to stand out or away from oneself. Everything which is real exists as something which stands out, appears. Man alone appears to himself, discloses himself in one way or another. As Heidegger would say, man can exist authentically or unauthentically; he can refuse to disclose himself, he can also refuse to exist at all.

✓ We all know that most people take for granted *that* they exist and that other beings do also. Most people, in fact, live in a "given" world which they take for granted along with their own part in it. Their unthinking willingness to take themselves for granted can be shown by the fact that they "philosophically" take for granted that "one has to die sometime." But how strange that any man can pass off lightly the very thing which should be most shocking to him as a person, this reminder of his essential contingency and factuality. And yet it appears that most people are aware of factuality only in general, and outside themselves. When they are shocked into confronting it in themselves, they hasten

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to forget. For example, we all use the first person singular with as shallow a self-consciousness as is compatible with the superficial requirements of daily routines and conventions.

But any man can raise the question of his being and thereby betray a glimmering sense of an unsuspected self, for man is indeed the sort of being—the only sort he knows—who can betray himself to himself. Man's existence as a questioner is, therefore, characteristic of him, and his wonderment about causes and reasons of any sort is basic to his human nature. "I cannot totally grasp all that I am," said Augustine, but I can to some extent disclose the root of both knowledge and human energies in myself. What one knows takes on a new meaning when dipped in the well of existential dynamism.

Nothing can be more abstract than the ego (cf. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*), and existentialism can easily founder on a reef of intellectualism. Most abstractions are far above the primary facts of perceptive experience, and we sometimes despair because of the remoteness of our thoughts from what we are thinking about. The self in particular is so naturally elusive, so near and yet so far from our ability to comprehend it, that it is apt to be plowed over in favor of concepts and sentiments easier to come by. Sartre and Camus—following Kierkegaard—confess

their appreciation of this by implementing their theories with fiction, by communicating their ideas indirectly. They have understood what Unamuno insisted on, that a philosopher has in some way to be a poet also. On the one hand, literary existentialism is not the exclusive medium for expressing a sense of "the man of flesh and bone"; philosophical and historical analyses must be fashioned as well. On the other hand, the existentialist never hesitates to use poetic myth in the way Freudian psychology uses dreams, as the stuff of analysis. By doing so the philosopher can remove the brackets he has set up around the concrete world, and let the abstractions and concepts be filled out by visions and memories of his experience. To use a phrase of Rousselot, the philosopher must occasionally "dream spirit." Through recalling his life as a whole, image and idea can be focused together and the unity of the person genuinely disclosed. "To read the subjective book of these strange signs—no one could help me with any rule, for the reading of that book is a creative act in which no one can stand in our stead."<sup>6</sup> But even if we cannot be given self-knowledge, we can share a vision of our common existential humanity. "The grandeur of real art . . . is to rediscover, grasp again and lay before us that reality from which we live so far removed and from which we become more and

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more separated . . . that reality is simply our life, life as it really is. . . But men fail to see it because they do not try to get light on it. And thus their past is encumbered with countless photographic negatives which lie useless because the intelligence has not developed them.”<sup>7</sup>

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## II

### THE EXPERIENCE

*It is quite conceivable that the glory of life is available to everyone and always in its entire fullness, but veiled, in depths, invisible, far off. But it is there not as a hostile force, not averse, not deaf. If it is summoned by the right word, the right name, it comes.*

*Franz Kafka*

If philosophers are generally embarrassed when asked, "What is philosophy?" how much more embarrassed are existentialists when asked to tell what existentialism is, "in a few words of one syllable." The existentialist's creed, of course, has been articulated by its prophets and priests, by Kierkegaard, by Jaspers, by Heidegger, by Sartre. But who can quote a satisfactory definition, which, like "man is a rational animal," expresses the simple insights behind the



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special theories? Existentialism is like the life it pretends to be talking about: lived first, talked about afterwards. And yet, because it is a theory of man, one feels justified in asking, "What sort of a theory of man?" To reply with Sartre<sup>1</sup> that it is a theory which affirms "the priority of existence over essence,"<sup>2</sup> is to make a metaphysical remark which by itself can mean practically nothing to the average intelligent person, and which in its generality is ambiguous even to the student of philosophy. And yet Sartre, who is merely repeating Heidegger's version of Kierkegaard's priority of life over speculation, has employed a formula which later in this book we shall have to make much of. Even Sartre sensed the murkiness of his reply and tried once again (quoting Kierkegaard): "Subjectivity must be the starting-point." But how much does this mean to the average intelligent person? And may not this, too, be ambiguous to the student of philosophy? It would be wiser to leave definitions aside for a moment and try another kind of explanation.

What is but an obstacle to the amateur becomes a suspicion in the mind of the professional intellectual, whose antipathy to existentialism has been rationalized as follows: "What is called existentialist philosophy has become very largely an exercise in the art of misusing the verb 'to be!'"<sup>3</sup> It will be more

profitable to remind ourselves of the wry comment of an Italian idealist: "Existentialism deals with existence in the manner of a thriller."<sup>4</sup> It is useless to deny that the existentialist makes much of being; he cannot make enough. Whether he misuses the word—whether philosophy is condemned to be silent over the question of reality—can be ascertained only by a more searching appraisal of first principles, primary assumptions, than most contemporary philosophers are willing to make. But it is true, as de Ruggiero has so rightly reminded us, that existentialism, like the life of man it purports to tell about, is concerned with the things a thriller, a romance, a movie are concerned with: death, love, evil, terror, violence, time, memory, peace, action, suspense, momentary visions of sorrow and joy. If these things are so unreal—or the human mind so incapable—that they cannot be talked about, existential philosophy is as nonsensical as the logicians would have us believe. But it is impossible to accept the intellectualist's claim that the linguistic powers of philosophy are even less than the linguistic powers of the human being in general.

Perhaps skeptics quaver at the appropriation by philosophy of such words as "anguish," "crisis," "restlessness," "death," "nostalgia." Are these not, however, necessary for a philosophy which, unlike the philosophies of the past centuries, is focusing its eye

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on "the man of flesh and bone"? Perhaps even more than the language used some critics have objected to the tone, the emotion, the feeling of urgency which surround existentialism. In the realm of concepts and internal consistency there can be no urgency, no feeling at all. The antithesis between life and thought is not recognized; it too is "nonsense." The philosopher cannot take seriously Pascal's remark that "nothing is so important to man as his own state, nothing so formidable to him as eternity." Pascal was acquainted with the things which take us by the throat and remind us that we ourselves are at stake; he had himself experienced—as do all of us at some time or other—the "bite of existence." Like Kierkegaard, Pascal could but say what he meant in antinomies, by emphasizing the differences between the existential man and the over-intellectual man. Like Kierkegaard's, Pascal's sense of the urgency of life was translated into a profound impatience and exasperation so characteristic of most existentialists. Existence is itself essentially restless, and the closer the awakened self crawls to the springs of its own restlessness, the more uneasy rides its capability for communicating what seems so certain, and so important. As a result, the existentialist often falls back (cf. Kierkegaard and Jaspers) on labeling existence as irrational and incommunicable, especially when he is just be-

ginning to succeed in making some sense of what he means. Surely even the friendly critic is justified in becoming exasperated in turn. Are we then reduced to attempting to express the inexpressible in order to impart the meaning of existentialism? Or is there not a difference between underlining the age-old wonderment of man at the fact and inexhaustible complexity of reality on the one hand, and, on the other, surrendering—if verbally only—reason's legitimate function, to understand as best it can?

¶ The existentialist wants it clearly understood that his and anyone else's life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced, and he will go to any lengths in order to maintain this distinction between life and thought. ¶ He is not justified in denying truths in order to do this, but he shares the common man's contempt for ignoring the simple things of life; he is to be distinguished from the common man by the nature of the simple things he holds dear. But in general we may summarize the existentialist as an impatient fellow, whose emotions are not divorced from his powers of understanding, a man nostalgic for the bedrock of things, persons, values, and feelings. He cannot forget that he too is a little incarnation, spirit in flesh and bone, here and now, himself and no one else. He cannot forget because he feels himself and thereby both understands and

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evaluates his existence. His existence is being consumed without recovery—he knows this if only through feeling his body's tempo of subsistence. He feels, and thereby knows, that everyone dies alone and in his own way.

The ontological analysis of human nature is little more than one more kind of intellectualism if it is not vitalized by feeling. Analysis of almost anything other than human nature guarantees its own credibility, but the mind cannot speak for the heart; it must speak from the heart. For "the heart has its reasons which reason does not know." Ontological analysis, although necessary to us, would be ineffective unless one's heart were in it. The intuition or feeling for what is real, solid, living, can turn into a mirage, and one may grow disillusioned and distrustful of reason itself. As Sartre has said, "Ordinarily existence is hidden, it is here, all around us, in us; it *is* us and you cannot say a word without speaking of it; but you cannot touch it."<sup>5</sup> No, we cannot touch it, but we *are* it and we can feel it.

Ordinarily we are aware of ourselves as *merely* existing, as being-there (Heidegger's *Dasein*). That is, in our unreflective, vaguely conscious states, when we are not thinking of anything in particular, we are aware of ourselves as being not all there, just there. And as thinking becomes more active and

we turn our discriminating eye from one thing to another, the dim sense of self is likely to give in to the high-grade mirage of conceptualization. There is little at either stage to inform the soul of its authentic status, of *what* and *who* we are. Recognition even of the relevance of these questions has to go begging until memory opens its secrets to us. "There also meet I with myself; I recall myself, what, where, or when I have done a thing; and how I was affected when I did it." It was Augustine, not Proust, who put his finger on what Berdyaev has called "man's most profound ontological principle, the one that cements and preserves the unity of his personality." Memory hands over from its treasure room loot for reflection and heart warming; it is a source of utility and fiction. In memory one comes across oneself as a whole, and in extraordinary flashes of self-recall—dubbed "frontier-situations" by Jaspers—the basic things of the soul are apparently revealed.

These basic things are produced with their values tagged to them, for they are products of the full emotional life of the soul. But as emotional they bear a "cognitive aspect,"<sup>6</sup> that is, they have been dressed to be devoured easily by the reflective powers. The emotions themselves signify the state a person is in, his "ontic status"; emotions are, therefore, primarily introverted while the cognitive power, general-

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ly speaking, is extroverted. But any act of awareness (any act of care, as Heidegger would put it) is both emotional and cognitive at each level: the soul feels itself in rapport with whatever it is apprehending. The act of love, for instance, is too often thought of as a "merely emotional" state, but while its self-feeling aspect is much stronger than in some less unitive and less intense acts, in love one can plainly distinguish three components: desire, understanding, pleasure.

- ✓ Emotional states tell one about oneself. The phrase "how one is feeling" is synonymous with self-disclosure. The way I feel is the way I am at the moment, or the way I can be if I want to be. Emotional cognition is by itself unreflective; it can be translated from a vague feeling to definite understanding, through reflection. Emotions stand between definition and the ontic status, and there is no short cut by means of conceptualization. Emotions are passageways to the "inner self." For this reason generalized self-knowledge—the kind we are forced to deal with in a book—can never seem credible unless it springs from and is accompanied by emotional awareness. Even in ordinary conversation, "How are you?" means the same as "How do you feel?" We feel or sense existence; otherwise the factuality of things and ourselves would remain completely dark to us. The Thomist witnesses to this when he says

that all knowledge originates in the senses. The existentialist insists that he add: knowledge of contingent fact as well as individuality is sensed in order to be understood. This existential awareness differs from the substantial, formal awareness of the discriminating power of the mind, for it is physiological, sympathetic, unitive. Even so, we must correct any apparent one-sidedness by acknowledging with Whitehead that all knowing has an "affective tone": "The basis of experience is emotional."

If this is true, we should expect to find the credibility of existentialism in experience, but as Henry James has said in his essay, "The Art of Fiction," "It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience . . . What kind of experience is intended? And where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete. It is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind." Such an atmosphere may be intensified to the point of definition and focus by certain occurrences which have the power not given to most occasions, to disclose to the self who and what its situation is. At any rate, it is undeniable that some people are never the same again after experiencing



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momentary flares of self-realization or more extended immersions in suffering, danger, or love. A dangerous situation, for instance, may have an intelligible cause, in time and place; but there need be no rationale at all to the time and place of an instantaneous intuition of self-being. We cannot even assert that such an intuition takes place in everyone. Wherever it does take place, the soul is fortified with an undiluted conviction of its worth and its duration.

It may not be possible to compress the meaning of existentialism into a definition; fortunately, there is a surer way of communicating its essence. We have said that existentialism is characterized by a sense of urgency, and we look for some symptom of this urgency in all existentialists. The question is, what is the cause in experience of this special sense of existence? We are now in a position to answer this question, and at the same time begin to explain the meaning of existentialism. The existential creed is an outgrowth of a conversion of the soul which takes place in some persons who have been gravely impressed by the glimpse of themselves which they got in one or both of two intuitions of the self. The first intuition is of the unique, living self; the second is of the unique, dying self. (These may sometimes be combined into one complex intuition.) The pres-

ence of these intuitions in an existentialist can always be detected by the impact on the theoretical distinctions he makes, especially such distinctions as: the priority of existence over essence, the priority of life over thought, the priority of feeling over conceptualizing. In the succeeding chapters we shall examine representative existential theories with this in mind.

At any moment a spontaneous vision of the soul may take place in anyone, and he will then see himself as himself, caught in the middle of time—his own time as well as other people's—here and now, a person with such and such a name and history, friends and family, defects and capabilities. He may feel as Pascal did, "When I consider the brief span of my life, swallowed up in eternity past and to come, the little space that I occupy, lost in the immensity of space of which I know nothing and which knows nothing of me, I am terrified and I am astonished that I am here rather than there." Nothing is more certain, nothing more humbling, nothing less effaceable than the impress of one's own contingency. Or he may feel with Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov, "Life is only given to me once and I shall never have it again; I don't want to wait for the 'happiness of all.' I want to live myself, or else better not live at all . . . Where is it I've read that some one condemned to death says or thinks, an

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hour before his death, that if he had to live on some high rock, on such a narrow ledge that he'd only room to stand, and the ocean, everlasting darkness, everlasting solitude, everlasting tempest around him, if he had to remain standing on a square yard of space all his life, a thousand years, eternity, it were better to live so than to die at once! Only to live, to live and live. Life! whatever it may be!"

This intuition of the uniqueness of one's own life bears an imperative to continue to live uniquely as long as one can, to make no compromises with the enemies of existence in all its fullness. So much one may feel, and yet how hard it is to put it into words. Emotions are stuff for reflection, but the deeper the emotion, the more involved the self is in its feelings, the harder it is to define the status of the soul. One of the clearest efforts at expressing what usually seems inexpressibly baffling is contained in Gerard Manley Hopkins' commentary (in his *Notebooks*) on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola: "I find myself both as a man and as myself something most determined and distinctive, at pitch, more distinctive and higher pitched than anything else I see. I find myself with my pleasures and pains, my powers and experiences . . . all my fate, more important to myself than anything I see . . . And this whether I speak of human nature or of my individuality . . . And this is much

more true when we consider the mind; when I consider my self-being, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of *I* and *me* above and in all things, and (which) is incommunicable by any means to another man"—unless other men have had the same feeling.

The taste of self-being may be coated with gall if the intuition is of the self under sentence of death. But gall is no less biting and ineffaceable. Albert Camus has engraved the lines of this darker side of the coin of self-contingency in saying: "Actually I was sure of myself, sure of everything . . . sure of my present life and of the death that was coming . . . that, no doubt was all I had, but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into . . . I'd been waiting for this present moment . . . which was to justify me . . . From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come."<sup>7</sup> Or, as Sartre has put it: "Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet. Nature sprang back, my youth went with the wind, and I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well-meaning little universe of yours. I was like a man who's lost his shadow. And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders."<sup>8</sup> (The same person

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might have been speaking in either passage.) Both Sartre and Camus see themselves as isolated by the oncoming of death, and yet endowed with personal freedom to establish their true dignity. The "dark wind blowing from my future," which Camus later talks of, is just another image for the phenomenon of anguish or dread which Heidegger emphasizes in his analysis of the self. The soul in anguish over its contingency touches the beginning of the mystery and inexhaustibility of existence; the soul touches upon that which permits both self and species to be, the very aspect of reality which at bottom is indistinguishable and primordial: being, existence. If the object of dread or anguish is *nothing*, as Heidegger feels, may it not be the mark of the infinite in reality which is incarnate in the individual and the species? If so, the soul in feeling its contingency is in fact getting a whiff of the inexhaustibility and infinity of being itself.

Whether this be true or not, many men—among them all those who call themselves existentialists—can testify to having been confronted with their finitude—or, as theologians would say, their creatureliness. Even the glimpse or sense of the infinity of being, the mark of the Creator on the creature, is but a sense; it is not a comprehension, possession. The individual achieves self-recognition through being saddled with a tragic sense of life. But tragedy is pessimistic only in so far

as it is realization of the curse of finitude; tragedy comprehends at the same time the hunger or nostalgia for being, infinity, the absolute. Hopkins, who said,

*Each mortal thing does one thing and the same,  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells,  
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,  
Crying what I do is me, for that I came,*<sup>9</sup>

completed his description of the basic impetus of the self by naming it "Christ"—that is, the hunger for the absolute is itself a sign of the Creator in the creature. Sartre was referring to the same thing when, in speaking of this hunger, he said: "But need we go so far afield to look for it? It [the absolute] is there all around us, under our feet and in all our gestures. We make absolutes . . . You light your pipe and that is an absolute; you don't like oysters and that is an absolute . . . Whether the world is matter or spirit, whether God exists or does not exist . . . nothing will ever be able to negate the fact that you passionately loved such and such a picture, such and such a cause, and such and such a woman; lived it, willed, and undertook it, and that you engaged your whole being in it."<sup>10</sup> Does not this sound a familiar chime? Have not all of us said from time to time, "Whatever else has happened, whatever else can happen, *this* is real, this is wonderful!" The sun rising, some lingering scent in the air,

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the shy smile of a stranger, the affection for our children. These are the real things with which concepts must keep in good standing or else lose sense.

The two kinds of intuition just described are the sources of existential certainty, of the existential creed. The existentialist believes in life, his own, and consequently in other persons' also. He cannot forget that life is short, slippery, and totally responsible. The self-assurance attained through such direct intuitions may also be precipitated by critical experiences of danger, loving, dying, fighting. Why does everyone "love a lover?" Why are we "thrilled to death" by death, suffering, terror in novels and movies? Are we not thus welcoming vicarious experience as a substitute for elemental needs of our own? The lust for adventure is a lust for tension, and in extreme tension the self feels itself at stake. The soul thrives on "frontier situations."<sup>11</sup> One who feels himself at stake feels himself alive, and wins dignity and uniqueness in his own eyes. Of course, we all want recognition from others, but first we want to recognize ourselves for what we are and can be. The antinomies of pure reason are but shadows of the antinomies of existence. "Man can be broken by them or achieve a power of life" (Jaspers). On the frontiers of his existence a man can view himself as he really is. "Before him the realm of objectivities, behind him the powers and pre-

dispositions of the subject . . . both unending, both inexhaustible and impenetrable" (Jaspers).

The antinomies of existence cannot be dissolved—they are given—but should be faced freely and made the most of. As Unamuno has said: "Suffering tells us *that* we exist." And, "our great endeavor must be to make ourselves irreplaceable." We feel homeless, exiled from a comprehension and possession of everything that is real in and around us. But we know that we are free to make the most of our lives, by understanding our "ontic status" and by perfecting our capabilities in so far as circumstances allow us. And yet it is not enough to be active; we must impregnate every action with the assurance of its value to us, with the self-assurance of a person who has come to terms with himself. On the brighter side of the coin of self-contingency Dostoyevsky has engraved his idiot prince's hope, "What if I were not to die! What if I could go back to life—what eternity! And it would all be mine! I would turn every moment into an age! I would lose nothing. I would count every minute as it passed, I would not waste one!"

The starting-point of every existentialist is the same, an intuition of the self which imprints an indelible certainty and direction of interest. Whether the subsequent variations spring from a corresponding intuitional variation—an intuition of the unique, living



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self rather than an intuition of the unique, dying self —no one can say for certain of anyone else. But that there are different kinds of existentialism is so obvious that one is obliged at least to try to define the nature of the divergence. Sartre himself has pointed to one way of separating existentialists, into Christians and atheists; but this differentiation has to overlook another, that between those holding an emphatically tragic or nihilistic view of man's nature and those who emphasize the dynamic aspects of man. Kierkegaard, for example, was a believer, and yet his general view of the human condition is as much akin to that of the unbeliever Heidegger as that of the Jesuit Rousselot.

Sartre's distinction is, therefore, only relevant to one who has not sufficiently considered the possibility of two existential accents; for Sartre every existentialist is a tragic existentialist. And we could agree with him if we were obliged to define existentialism by certain secondary features; but, as we have already remarked, the presence of existentialism is disclosed by the sense of self-contingency which may or may not stress the peculiarly tragic condition of human nature. Another accent is possible, and although the exponents of the former kind of existentialism have not yet been able to assent to the inherently dynamic character of personal life, there is no reason why a historian of existentialism should be so restricted. It is, neverthe-

less, just for us to point out that since there are two possible existential focuses, each springing from the same basic feeling for personal existence, neither is completely true to its origin without in some way including the other. For this reason, we shall not only keep in mind the ideal of a fully reconciled existentialism, including both directions of emphasis, but we shall expect to see in each stream of existentialism shades of its counterpart.

## III

## THE DIALECTIC

*Kierkegaard*

*Why we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called! Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men—men with a real individual body and blood. We are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to continue to be some sort of impossible generalised man.*

*Fyodor Dostoyevsky*

Sören Kierkegaard<sup>1</sup> (who died in 1855) was the father of contemporary existentialism. He achieved only a local notoriety during his life as a thorn in the side of the Danish National Church and as an ec-

centric man-about-town. Not until Karl Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* appeared in 1919 did German philosophy—and subsequently European philosophy—fully realize that a new prophet had arisen in the West. The harsh individualism of Kierkegaard and the personal nihilism of Heidegger, Germany's most successful systematizer of existentialism, expressed the misery of postwar Germans facing continual crises of hunger and self-respect in an unfriendly, chaotic Europe. Just so did Heidegger's French pupil, Sartre, express the trial of oppression and resistance for the French during and after the German occupation of France in the second world war.

Between the two wars English and American readers could obtain Kierkegaard only in German or French; just recently has an English translation of most of his writings been completed. Even now readers, misled or enchanted by the diffuseness as well as by the vigor of his writing, have still failed on the whole to come to the heart of Kierkegaard's preaching as he expressed it in such an observation as, "It is the misfortune of our age that it has too much knowledge, that it has forgotten what it means to exist!"

✓ Kierkegaard's existentialism introduced the ideas and terminology (borrowed by Heidegger) needed for dissipating the foggy curtain of post-Cartesian in-

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difference to philosophical anthropology. Kierkegaard as an opponent of abstractionism was, in part, a romantic, but his analytical insight into human nature was foreign to the emotional ebb and flow of romanticism. In fact, his polemic was directed at the romantic (the Aesthete) just as much as at the Hegelian idealist (the Speculative Philosopher), or the complacent church-going Christian. Furthermore, although it may be said that Kierkegaard's bias against Hegel seems to have made him confused about the rightful claims and role of reason on the one hand, and the social and political needs of man's nature on the other (Kierkegaard has no explicit social ethic, as some students have pointed out),<sup>2</sup> one should not forget that Kierkegaard's environment consisted not of the world but of other men who have "forgotten what it means to exist." He himself was neither master nor victim. He believed that "each age has its own characteristic depravity. Ours is perhaps not pleasure or indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual." "My principal thought was that in our age, because of the great increase of knowledge, we had forgotten what it means to exist, and what inwardness signifies, and that the misunderstanding between speculative philosophy and Christianity was explicable on that ground."

Unlike a romantic Kierkegaard neither vainly

hoped nor blindly despaired. He knew too much about himself as a human being to glory in his own feelings or to channel himself in ecstatic enjoyment of nature. He knew also of the hope held out by Christianity. His course (however tortuous and verbose it may seem to the reader) required the full exercise of the very reason whose abuses he objected to in others. Even the aphorism, "Only the truth which edifies is truth for you," should not be taken as a sign of irrationalism, for by this sentence he meant to emphasize the basically ethical character of human interests; namely, that whatever contributes to the basic requirements of the self is edificatory and makes sense to us. The first question for ethics is not "How do we behave?" but "What do we want?" Kierkegaard has an answer in his analysis of the main psychological types and their "stages along life's way." But an account of the inner motivation of an individual cannot be as systematic as Hegel's logical ontology for although "a logical system is possible, an existential system is impossible." Existential reality (as particular and contingent) is incommunicable, and "every system fantastically dissipates the concept of existence."<sup>3</sup> "Reality itself is a system—for God; but it cannot be a system for an existing spirit." However, "an actual emphasis on existence must be expressed in an essential form; in view of the elusiveness of

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existence, such a form will have to be an indirect form, namely the absence of a system."

Kierkegaard knew that singularity cannot be translated by generalities, and that even an attempt to state the principle of individuation is likely to draw one's mind away from the very sense of individuation felt interiorly. As Rousselot has since said, "The mind abstracts all that it touches," including itself and the principles of self-ness which it shares with other selves. Kierkegaard's guiding principle was that of "transforming everything into inwardness," and he spoke of the parts of this plan as consisting, first, of "an imaginative inwardness which evokes the possibilities with intensified passion, with sufficient dialectical power to transform all into nothing in despair" (cf. Ibsen's *Brand*); and second, of "an ethical pathos, which with a quiet, incorruptible, and yet infinite passion and resolve, embraces the modest ethical task, and edified thereby stands self-revealed before God and man." In other words, a poetic exhortation followed by ethical analysis. The initial phase he himself developed in the first part of *Either/Or*, and one can see a similar aim in such a book as Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* or Sartre's *La Nausée*. Any call to faith, so to speak, must fight against what Heidegger calls "un-authentic" living. The second phase of his plan Kierkegaard carried out in Part Two of *Either/Or*

and in some of his later writings. It should not be forgotten, however, that existentialism as a "queer" doctrine, standing outside the conventional philosophies of its time, has had to attack as well as be attacked, has had to establish its reason for existing. In addition, it has had to evoke a sense of existence, and this it has accomplished as much by Dostoyevsky's literary dynamism as by Kierkegaard's irony. Modern literature's allegorical sense of man's inner nature is but the counterpart of the existential analyses of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, and in fact complements these by reminding the analytical mind of its most urgent responsibility and its debt to reality.

Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* not only expresses the basically ethical character of his existentialism but contains practically all the elementary notions and insights of his entire literature ("within a literature"). It is a germinal book, accordingly, both for an understanding of Kierkegaard and for *Existenzphilosophie*. "Two ways, in general, are open for an existing individual: Either he can do his utmost to forget that he is an existing individual, Or he can concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that he is an existing individual." Therefore, the "first act [is] to exhibit the existential relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical within an existing individual." "*Either/Or*, whose very title is suggestive, exhibits the existential



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relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical in existing individuals. This is for me the book's indirect polemic against speculative philosophy which is indifferent to the existential."<sup>4</sup>

An aesthete (epicurean, romantic) is someone who "expects everything from without. Hence the morbid dread of not having found one's place in the world." The conventionally mannered attitude of three quarters of civilized communities is so cautious and fearful that the "average person" (two incommensurate words) is afraid of realizing that he is unique and alone, for he thinks his self "comes out" only when he is within the secure orbit of certain social relations. In transcending his isolation he finds himself in some way, for man is basically social and transcendental. But the debasing compromise of this ethical truism is revealed when the average person ceases to be average and discovers that the isolated self he has transcended is not and cannot be done away with. The average person is restless, dissatisfied, a creature of moods of one sort or another. He turns continually from one thing to another, and gets along by learning a trade or a hobby by means of which he can camouflage as well as canalize his peculiar potentialities. He may devote his life to the conventional ethics of pleasure or duty, although "when a man lives aesthetically, his mood is always eccentric because he has his center in

the periphery. Personality has its center within itself, and he who has not his self is eccentric." That there is a center, uncared for, and unknown, is proven by the occasional outcropping of melancholy, that "hysteria of the spirit," as Kierkegaard called it. "The personality would be conscious of itself in its eternal validity. If this does not come to pass, melancholy ensues." But "the man who has sorrow's anxiety knows why he is sorrowful or anxious—not so the melancholy." The melancholy man can be wearily dissatisfied or can inhabit "the city of dreadful night," where only death tastes good. Suicide is a logical (although not an existential) conclusion (cf. Camus) to the romanticist's defeatism, and as unjustifiable as his early hopes. His undisciplined distrust of reason is but an inversion of intellectualism itself, and the same person can go from one extreme to the other in one life time.

"In mood the personality is present, but only dimly. He who lives aesthetically seeks as far as possible to be absorbed in mood, and the more the personality disappears in the twilight of mood, so much the more is the individual in the moment, and this is the most adequate expression for the aesthetic existence." The pleasures of the moment are true life to many, and "he who says he wants to enjoy life always posits a condition which either lies outside the individual or

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is in the individual in such a way that it is not posited in the individual by himself." That the pleasures of the moment are not life at all is testified also by Proust who explained that one is so caught up in the mere doing of anything that it is impossible to taste the full impact of the moment's reality. Only in recalling the moment—spontaneously—can the full nature of the moment be delivered and tasted. As Kierkegaard himself said, "He who lives ethically has memory of his life—and he who lives aesthetically has not."

An aesthete's melancholy is a symptom of the soul's sickness and self-repression. It is, therefore, "an existential possibility tending toward existence," and can end in despair. "The aesthetic view of life has proved itself to be despair." "So then choose despair, for even despair is a choice." One can doubt without choosing to, but one cannot despair without choosing. And when a man despairs, he chooses again—and what is it he chooses? He chooses himself, not in his immediacy, not as a fortuitous individual; he chooses himself in his "eternal validity." Doubt is a despair of thought, despair is a doubt of the personality. The primordial questionableness of the individual to himself is first put in the form of sorrow, despair, suffering, danger, dread of one's uniqueness and mortality. Despair is loss of hope, the failure to find peace in

people or things. In despair the ethical problem grows serious, and one listens to the self doubting itself. We can now appreciate Kierkegaard's observation that, "the aesthetical in a man is that by which he is immediately what he is; the ethical is that whereby he becomes what he becomes." "The great thing is not to be this or that but to be oneself, and this everyone can do if he wills it." "The choice itself is decisive for the content of the personality." "The instant of choice is very serious." "Only a serious personality is a real personality."

Seriousness is the climate of crisis and resolution. Once the questionableness of man's existence is raised in any electrifying way, and a glimpse into the dynamo of self is had, the choice is given of keeping the wound of sensibility open or withdrawing and letting the wound heal. This is the beginning of freedom, a "baptism of the will,"<sup>5</sup> and a person "can remain in his freedom only by constantly realizing it." He realizes it by choosing to choose. This choice is transcendental and refers not to the reality of the thing chosen, but to the reality of the act of choice. I do not choose this or that thing primarily; I choose myself, to see and be myself. In doing so, I repent having not seen and been myself before. But above all, "in making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness,

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the pathos with which one chooses." "Therefore, even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he had chosen the wrong. For the choice being made with the whole inwardness of his personality, his nature is purified and he himself brought into immediate relation to the eternal power whose omnipresence interpenetrates the whole of existence."

The dialectical nature of choice is brought out in the fact that "that which is chosen does not exist and comes into existence with the choice: that which is chosen exists, otherwise there would be no choice." "I do not create myself, I choose myself." It requires courage to choose oneself, for "in choosing myself absolutely I choose despair," and "in despair I choose the absolute, for I myself am the absolute. What is the absolute? It is I myself in my eternal validity." "The reason why it is so painful for men to choose themselves . . . is their absolute isolation." Isolation of any kind involves suffering, which is "a dying away from immediacy," and is "the essential expression for existential pathos." But the person who goes through the baptism of will and faces himself for the first time does choose himself precisely in isolation. The depths of his isolation are quickly plumbed by virtue of his despair of "really existing," even while he is trying to

exist. The accompanying dread of death for the only reality we can be stamps the chosen course with finitude.

✓The self despairs only because it is not self-sufficient, and because it realizes insufficiency, not in the melancholy which wavers between equally irrational anticipations and "blues," but in the highly rational understanding of the self's true nature as dependent and creaturely, even in its one fine moment of choosing. This is why Kierkegaard says that despair is related to the eternal in man. I choose myself as independent, as capable of making of my self what it ought to be, "from scratch" as it were, and yet as Kierkegaard points out: "That self which he despairingly wills to be, is a self which he is not; what he really wills is to tear his self away from the Power which constituted it."

"The individual has his teleology in himself, has inner teleology, is himself his teleology. His self is thus the goal towards which he strives." But he must become a whole man, and this involves becoming the ideal of his humanity. He sets up, strives for, and chooses standards of right for all men. "The ethical is the universal, and only when the individual himself is the universal is it possible to realize the ethical." This is the secret of conscience, that it is at once an individual life and at the same time the universal.

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Choosing oneself, choosing inwardness, involves making good choices also, involves carrying out one's social, worldly activities in a manner appropriate to the demands of the species. The individual has his ideals. "He who lives ethically (that is universally) has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates with his consciousness his whole concretion."

The actual requirements of choice, of obeying one's conscience and doing one's duty, that is, acting universally, are suspended by the teleology of the self, are suspended by the striving for one's self as isolated and eternally valid and not universal. "The teleological suspension consists in the individual's finding himself in a state precisely the opposite of that which the ethical requires, so that far from being able to begin, each moment he remains in this state he is more and more prevented from beginning. He is not related to his task as possibility to actuality, but as impossibility. Thus the individual is suspended from the requirements of the ethical in the most terrible manner, being in the suspension heterogeneous with the ethical, which nevertheless has an infinite claim upon him." As a contingent person he must not take his eyes off his inner striving, and yet as a human person he must fulfill the requirements of his humanity. This means that every person must compromise both parts and resolutely try to maintain

the unity of his being through the interplay and interdependence of both parts. This compromise is basic and necessary. But unauthentic compromises—resulting in inversions—follow from giving exclusive rights to one part or the other. “If the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows it or not.” The self can forget itself, accidentally, as it pursues the universal ends required by its humanity. But the end pursued for its own special sake, and for no other, is not prescribed by any self-imposed and rationally acceptable ideal. This is the point of departure for the soul’s yearning for a supernatural prescription and for a final religious choice and conversion. But a Christian choice is unlike all others in that it amounts to a “leap” to something totally paradoxical: namely, faith in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and his redemption of man.

- ✓ Kierkegaard’s recall of Protestants to the dogmatic facts of orthodox Christianity has received so much attention from theologians and churchmen that it may be suspected at times that they have forgotten Kierkegaard’s warning: One cannot know what it is to be a Christian until he knows what it is to exist. The intellectual’s absorption in ideas, concepts, dogmas, and doctrines has already lured some theological existentialists into being “speculative philosophers.” They would do well to remember that Gospel



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Christianity itself solemnly accentuates the significance of the individual subject, for as Kierkegaard reminds us, "Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness."

It is in what Kierkegaard calls the "teleological suspension" (whose religious expression is sin—compare Heidegger's guilt) that the soul's unity is seen as polar or split. As human (sharing its humanity with other selves), it reasons out the ideals and standards of human nature. These are finite and attainable through attention to duty, and the "good man" is one who chooses to attain them and chooses consistently and well. But as personal, the soul has gazed into the mist of the infinity of its being—or perhaps into the image of the infinity of the Creator—and knows once for all that it belongs to this infiniteness and yet cannot by itself attain unto it. It reacts by responses of charity and heroism "above and beyond the call of duty." It knows *that* it exists, but sees itself as apart from itself, and the only thing that it can say of this concretion of being which appears infinitely elusive is that it is really nothing. The light shining into the world of personal despair reveals little or nothing definite, and the dread of self and of the self's movement towards nothingness—which we

call death—is either a foretaste of the self's ceasing to be, or, as Christianity would have it, a symbol of the incomprehensibility of the Creator. Certainly human beings seem inexhaustible even to their own minds. Of some persons, especially those one loves, one can never know enough, and even within ourselves our energies and memories seem infinite and incomprehensible. This is that mirror of perfection, that mark of creatureliness, to which Christian writers point.

"The self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor and the infinite the expanding factor." The soul is expressing the expanding side when it realizes *that* it exists and that its existence is its infinite concern. But this concern is not one it can cope with by itself; it "can be performed only by means of a relationship to God," for "the self is in sound health and free from despair only when, precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God." "The Christian heroism is to venture wholly to be oneself as an individual, this definite man, alone before the face of God, alone in this tremendous exertion and this tremendous responsibility; but it is not heroism to be humbugged by the pure idea of humanity or to play the game of marvelling at world history." "And this is the pitiful thing to one who contemplates human life, that so many live on in a quiet state of perdition . . . they outlive themselves . . . but they

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live their lives as it were outside themselves . . . and they are not alarmed by the problem of their soul's immortality, for they are already in a state of dissolution before they die."

Kierkegaard's antithesis of existence over against speculation has more profound philosophical implications than one sees at first glance, for the devious tangle of his style and literary plan has drawn too much attention to the superficially exasperating qualities of his mind. But Kierkegaard, like Proust, was "by definition" averse to definitions, for fear of losing contact with the reality of personal existence, and he hoped to present what he had to say without having to fall back on systematization. And yet his own defining and dialectical skill was so powerful that his existential insights found sharp aphoristic expression—sometimes in Hegelian jargon and an over-subtle dialectic. Even so, by piecing some of these insights together against the background of what is more generally known about Kierkegaard, we can draw inferences concerning his ontology. We can immediately infer, for example, that Kierkegaard was a psychological philosopher who habitually made much of the empirical data of consciousness and behavior, rather than outright ontological notions which might be taken for Hegelian logic. This fear of the hazards of putting existence into thought (in any sense) he

expressed when he said, "It might seem to be the proper thing to say that there is something which cannot be thought, namely, existence. But the difficulty persists in that existence itself combines thinking with existing in so far as the thinker exists." "No science can state what the self is, without stating it in perfectly general terms. And this is the wonderful thing about life, that every man who gives heed to himself knows what he himself is." And we may add, a man does know himself in a way that he does not know other beings, that is, in no narrowly cognitive way, but with the emotional awareness of his whole being.

Self-consciousness is feeling as well as thought, or rather is a felt thought, a thinking feeling. This is not to say that the awareness of other things does not include an emotional factor. On the contrary, the self as both knower and known, feeler and felt, guarantees the authenticity of all its experience. In addition, "existence involves first and foremost particularity, and that is why thought must abstract from existence, because the particular cannot be thought, but only the universal." Knowledge of other beings is usually "content" with generality, and handling the particular is a sensitive problem for the imagination, in life or literature. The self as a totality cares about itself as unique, not merely about its participation in a common humanity. In truth, part of the humanity of

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a self is to care not about the self's humanity but about something apart from the humanity, this particular concrescence of humanity, *me* or *you*. Particularity or contingency is felt rather than thought, and it requires what Husserl called an *epoché*, a forced halt, to catch sight and hold of particularity through the "rift in existence" (Nietzsche).

The *epoché* of the self and the vision seen through the rift is at the same time emotional and highly reflective. "All existential problems are passionate problems, for when existence is interpenetrated with reflection it generates passion." Conversely, when existence is interpenetrated with passion, genuine self-reflection may be generated. Genuine self-reflection, however, is a possibility only, and, in contradistinction to romantic emotionalism, depends on the doggedness with which the self hangs on to its original questionableness once it is disclosed. To hang on to oneself demands action, not passivity, and passionate action involves understanding and therefore true self-reflection. "What then is this self of mine? It is freedom. It is the most abstract of things, and yet at the same time, it is the most concrete."

This "doubleness characteristic of existence" runs all through man's being. "Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self

or it is that in the relation (which accounts for it) that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but (consists in the fact) that the relation relates itself to its own self. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short he is a synthesis."<sup>6</sup> Whatever the parts of the synthesis, man is alive, moving, becoming, striving. "Existence is striving." "To exist is to become." The self, deliberately or haphazardly, is always unfolding itself, but not primarily for its own sake.

The self does not as a rule see itself in a crisis, and yet "man regarded as spirit is always in a critical condition." Even if he feels no divine judgment of sin upon him (cf. Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*), at least he can be a crisis unto himself. He can pass judgments on the validity of his life, on the importance of being all that he can be. Most people have potentialities within them to develop, dispositions and tendencies to nurture, although it is not always apparent that these may be simply a context for the fundamental striving which is itself more proper to the particularity of *my* or *your* humanity, namely, the striving "to save my soul." This is the ethical task required by the exigencies of human nature. To save is first of all to have found, and once found the self may be lost again and forgotten. The truth, the unforgotten

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teness (ἀλήθεια), of a person's life is the burdening unity of his particularity, the natural imperative of which is too heavy for most people to bear. Man exists in a state of natural crisis, and "becoming subjective is the task proposed to every human being, and his highest task, highest interest, one which suffices for the longest life since it has the remarkable trait that it ceases only when life ceases." Man's most decisive act is choice itself, first of himself, and second for himself. Man can be a question to himself, can see his condition as a "rift" and himself as polar, split. His primary need, therefore, is to attain a balance of opposing forces within him, not ignoring the burden of his contingency. This task is not only noetic; it calls as loudly for a constant emotional struggle, first of all, to direct consciousness to the difficult task of groping for its own contingency, and secondly, to appreciate the essential dignity of personality. The self can feel itself, it can know itself "is there," but it cannot comprehend itself, for this would be a noetic function, and the soul is not adequately equipped for comprehension of contingency. The split in the soul cannot be mended because the soul always remains polar. It is responsible to God above law, and this "teleological suspension" is the ethical equivalent of original sin. The soul despairs of itself, therefore, and yet lives in dread of ceasing to be before it has won itself—noetical-

ly. The self does *not* comprehend itself, and in the act of self-reflection it sees itself as *not* itself. This internal *not* of consciousness is what is known as dread. The soul is thereby suspended between its humanity and its contingency; it swings to and fro between both poles of its being.

"The self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation." The goal, therefore, is "to arrive at a decision and renew it," but this—according to Kierkegaard's analysis—can be achieved only "by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself"; and thus "the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it." But in order to begin to be oneself, one must "leap" to another position, not given by itself, but held before one by the promise of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The authentic self is guaranteed only by the qualitative leap. Man does not contain within himself the resolution of his crisis, but he does have the possibility of raising the question of his crisis, and of feeling the importance to himself of his own contingency. He can reflect on himself, and by doing so see the importance of *his* question. He cannot look into the depths of his own heart and totally grasp *who* he is. If he



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were to do that, he would be looking through a sort of mirror into the face of his Creator—for his contingent self is in some sense a representation of God (*imago Dei*)—and since only his Creator knows fully *what* he is, man must either be satisfied with knowing *that* he is, or he must “leap” and embrace Christianity, “the desperate way out.” “Faith is the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity.” But “the last thing that human thinking” (if a man can trust that side of himself) “can will to do is to will to transcend itself in the paradoxical.” “The paradoxical character of Christianity consists in its constant use of time and the historical in relation to the eternal.” But how, Kierkegaard asks, can a decision affecting one’s eternal life depend on an historical occurrence, and particularly on such an absurd occurrence as that of God’s becoming man. To believe this is to leap over the binding rules and realism of thought and experience. This is truly a desperate way out, but commensurate with the inner crisis and nihilistic desperation of polarized human nature. .

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IV

ONTOLOGICAL NIHILISM

*Heidegger*

*We are but skin about a wind, with muscles clenched against mortality. We sleep in a long reproachful dust against ourselves. We are full to the gorge with our names for misery. Life, the pastures in which the night feeds and prunes the cud that nourishes us to despair. Life the permission to know death.*

*Djuna Barnes*

Heidegger,<sup>1</sup> the most original of Kierkegaard's successors, has been called by his enemies "the greatest sophist since Protagoras"; and while there may be some justification for name-calling, we must confess that his masterwork, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time)<sup>2</sup>—as yet untranslated—is without question the most impressive philosophic construction since Hegel's

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*Logik*, and contains much that could provoke fruitful if violent controversy. Although the parent of *L'Être et le néant* (Being and Nothing)—also untranslated—this book like many others has been referred to rather than read.

To his schooling at the hands of Jesuits on the one hand and the phenomenologist Husserl on the other, Heidegger owes his ontological bias and his acquaintance with scholastic philosophy. His preoccupation with philosophical anthropology stems partly from his early religious education, as well as from his reading of Kierkegaard, to whom he and many other European philosophers were directed after World War I by Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*.

The more telling impulse toward ontology originated with Husserl's claim that his phenomenological method could yield a "universal ontology." Although this is what Heidegger himself set out to uncover, he became sidetracked in the "fundamental ontology" of human existence. His preface to *Sein und Zeit* sets forth his aim. "Have we today an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'? By no means. Therefore, we have first to awaken an understanding of the sense of this question. The concrete working out of the question of the sense of being is the purpose of the following treatise. The interpretation of time as the possible horizon of any

understanding of being in general is its assumed goal."

Heidegger's phenomenological method, following that established by Husserl,<sup>3</sup> purports to be able to abstract the "intentional structure" of consciousness. "Phenomenology's comprehensive task is the systematic examination of the types and forms of intentional experience, and the reduction of intentional structures to the prime intentions, learning thereby what is the nature of the psychical, and comprehending the being of the soul." "We cannot discover the psychical in any experience except by a 'reflection' or perversion of the ordinary attitude." Husserl was prescribing for philosophy an occasional blotting out of the natural empirical tendency of the human mind to be concerned about this thing or that, recommending that particularity be put in "brackets" so that one can concentrate his attention on types of particularity and forms of concern. The "appearances" (the contentless, generalized objects of the mind) and the "positions" (the kinds of experiencing) attained by exceptional concentration and abstraction from sense (practiced by an *epoché*) are the twofold content of experience. With an effort one can shift the mind one further remove from particularity and, by bracketing once again, blot out both appearances and positions, so that through concentrating on the bare reflectivity of self-experience one reduces the content of the mind

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to the "ultimate structure of consciousness," "the universe of the a priori." Phenomenology can thus intuit "life's original teleological structure."

Heidegger, whose goal was precisely this grandiose universal ontology, attempted the preliminary task of building a fundamental ontology of human existence which, he assumed, would disclose the "horizon" on which a vision of ontology itself would be possible. In practice, the phenomenological method of bracketing and practicing *epochés* is probably little different from that employed by Kierkegaard or anyone else. Its rigor is impressive, especially when coupled with the tempting etymological potentialities of the German language; as a deliberate method it may even be a safeguard against an overdose of either empiricism or abstractionism, for it is characterized by a painstaking carefulness to leave nothing typical out of its analysis, to exhaust the content of consciousness, and to keep conclusions where they belong, at the end. This kind of thinking is, on the surface at least, quite different from the rapid, abstractive, and assumptive thinking of Aristotelianism, for example, which seems to start where empiricism has left off rather than from the explicit data of experience. But the results are in any case so similar that it may be suspected that phenomenology is a natural rather than an artificial method,

and that Thomism avails itself of this method without thinking about it.

And yet, because phenomenology is obsessed by data (Husserl's "To the things themselves!") it runs the risk, like Hegelian idealism or logical positivism, of getting so immersed in its data as to be drowned by itself alone. Even so, it would be well if other philosophies made one more aware of their data, for we must admit that as thinking beings we are responsible for our thoughts, and our notions of reality will depend not so much on reality as on our sense of it, our approach to it. If there is an authentic approach, a true sense, it will be the triumph of one mode of human living and thinking over another. The possibility of more than one approach to reality—more than one ontology—arises from the fact that man's nature is itself teeming with possibilities. Whatever the authentic sense of reality—"horizon" or atmosphere—one must first analyze the possible modes of being from which arise our sciences of being and thought. Ontology (metaphysics) must be validated by a sense of reality, and the most authentic sense possible. Even if certain Aristotelian principles, let us say, seem to make sense, the question should be: are they making as much sense as they can? Is their sense of reality as intense as it might be? If not, on-

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tology will amount to nothing more than the most abstract of the sciences. The "things" which are immediately sensed by us under a certain horizon (such as temporality) are ripe for ontologizing, and if ontology is to be convincing it must be prefaced by a special analysis of human nature which will show the root of the ontologizing endeavor in man. This is just what Heidegger tried to do, and his "fundamental ontology," or first philosophy, "is to be distinguished from all anthropologies, even philosophical."

Fundamental ontology is pre-anthropology. It stands for that analysis of human nature which reveals the metaphysical mode of man's being, "for that ontological analysis of finite human nature which shall prepare the basis for the metaphysics belonging to the nature of man." "Metaphysics is founded on the question about the finiteness of man." And the finiteness of man can be grasped not by abstract arguments or hand-me-down "perennial philosophies," but by careful examination of the basic varieties of thought and behavior made in an atmosphere of emotional awareness. Heidegger converts the Thomistic formula, *As man is, so he knows*, to the phenomenological (Cartesian) formula, *As man is aware, so he is*, and gives expression to this basic principle by asserting that "ontology is possible only as phenomenology";

"philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology proceeding from the interpretation of man."

"If "no time has known so much of man as ours, at no time has man become so questionable as in ours." We have the new sciences of psychoanalysis and sociology, and have added much to our understanding of economics and politics. But there is still no science of humanity which can claim back the title "anthropology" from the archaeologists and sociologists. Some of us have been looking for a fundamental ontology in the "great books" of the past. Perhaps we might have found it even in these, had we only known what to look for. But educational "humanities programs," which lack the empirical spirit of the existentialists, can only analogize, only "entertain ideas"; they will not find the transcendentals of human nature apart from the "man of flesh and bone." If, as Scheler has said, "all the central problems of philosophy lead back to the question of what man is and what metaphysical place he takes within the whole of being, of the world and God," a fundamental ontology could provide the standard for grading all the different anthropological inquiries.

✓ Heidegger's fundamental ontology depends on an analysis of the active factors in conscious, reflective experience. Consciousness is the stone on which all



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phenomenology is built, and the starting-point of the analysis of human nature. Man's being, unlike that of other living beings, reflects on itself, on the given of his senses. This reflectivity, which is over and above the passively transparent sensing of the nervous system, signifies that man has inner relations to himself and to the given world of his senses. Although Heidegger, like Husserl, does not argue (for he assumes) the question of the correspondence of this given world with the real world (he puts his world of actual objects out of his mind, in abeyance, in "brackets"), he does argue against the tendency to see the real world as merely there, "on hand," that is, without essential reference as being "given" for the self ("at hand"). He holds that the consequences of an attitude involving "on handness" (*Vorhandenheit*)<sup>4</sup> are the solidification of our notions, the inability to explain change and matter, the loss of a material principle of individuation, and the absence of the dynamic sense of reality which makes even the sense of things being "on hand" possible.

A human being is his "given," is both his experience and his experiencing. (For that matter—and here we step off the plane of phenomenological argument—a human being is himself given.) The identity signified by the *is* rests on an essential separation observable in all consciousness. To be one's own

consciousness, with all its content and activity, is what Heidegger means by *Dasein*. Man is just *there* (present, awake). *Dasein* signifies mere existence, brute fact of being, and consciousness, something being opposite to the self within itself. *Das Dasein ist Seiendes, dem es in seinem Sein um dieses selbst geht* (man's being is distinguished by the fact that he is concerned about himself).<sup>5</sup> By this oft-repeated definition of man Heidegger highlights the characteristic internal transcendentality of human reflection.

Man is present to himself, and the world is given by his senses; other animals merely see what there is to see, and do not carry on any activity apart from the transparency of their sensing. "Man is always ahead of himself to himself." He *is* present, *there*, and is moreover aware that he is there before and while he is aware that any particular thing or idea is given to him. "The being itself to which man can relate himself we call 'existence.'" And, "its essence consists in the fact that it has its being as its own to be." Therefore, man "understands himself out of his existence, out of a possibility of himself, of being himself or not himself. These possibilities he has either chosen himself or they are rooted within him or have grown up with him." Man's existence is essentially potential, but in the first instance—and predominantly—he is potential for his own actuality. A man is primarily concerned

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about himself, his "given," and only because of this is it possible for a man to be concerned about the actuality of other beings. This means that in order to know other selves one must first learn to appreciate himself. Genuine self-appreciation is the underlying form of all consciousness; it is what consciousness stands for. The human mind does not know immediately and transparently; but it is aware *that* it is aware, and is its own awareness.

"Existing always means relating oneself to non-human beings, to one's self and one's likes, so that in this relating one is concerned with the possibility of being one's inner being." "Man is a being which is in the midst of beings, so that the being which he is not and the being which he himself is at the same time has already become disclosed. This way of being we call existence. Only on the ground of being-understanding is existence possible." Other creatures, according to Heidegger, do not "exist": they are merely "on hand," that is, they are not ahead of themselves, they do not have the human power of self-reflection which he calls transcendentality. They neither carry their world within them, nor are they a world unto themselves. Existence is essentially potential, "on the move," "on the make," first in regard to itself, secondly in regard to the others of the sensible "given." What man can be (his essence) *is*

what he already is (his existence);<sup>6</sup> and his potentiality (in scholastic philosophy the essence is potential with regard to existence) is directed towards his actuality. "The essence (*Wesen*) of this being lies in its being-for. The essence (*Was-sein, essentia*) of this being must be conceived from its being (*existentia*)."<sup>7</sup> "The essence of man lies in his existence." "In everything there is what-being and that-being, essence and existence, possibility and reality,"<sup>8</sup> and man's being is characterized by his special concern for his own being. This concern is not like the mechanical self-preservation of animals, but is freely potential. Man may be directed in more than one way, properly or improperly: other living beings direct themselves properly by nature, improperly by accident.

Man's being has two general characteristics: first, the priority of existence over essence, and second, *my-ness*. Existence precedes even its self-concern—*Sum, ergo cogito*—but the concern (the *cogito*) is surreptitiously self-centered. To be able to be concerned one way rather than another, authentically or unauthentically, is proof of the freedom within the potentiality. There is something *not* mechanical about human beings; a man can be what he wants. Furthermore, man has two advantages over other creatures: first, his being is defined by his existence—by his self-concern (while their beings are defined by *what*

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they are); second, "to man there belongs an understanding of the being of every man—human being as a constituent of his existence." It is part of man's concern to be concerned about the actuality of an existence *among others*, of man as a being-in-the-world.

Some critics have held that Heidegger identifies essence and existence in man, and thus departs from the Thomistic ontology which identifies existence and essence in God alone. Heidegger may seem to be open to this charge, but in fact he is not. To clear him on this important point, let us remind ourselves of the implications of this scholastic distinction. Are they not somewhat as follows? God's nature is to be, and if he does exist at all, he cannot not be. God was not made and he will not cease to be—nor can he be other than he already is. (This is all one means by the word "God" in the first place.) This being, God, is therefore, almost totally unlike ourselves, for we as men know *that* we are but know also that we do not have to be. Heidegger knows this too, and his emphasis on the finitude and mortality of human nature should have shown that he could not be assigning man the ontological position usually attributed to God. Of course, Heidegger makes no claim to know anything of God, even that he exists, and his distinctions are intended to refer to man only. What he is saying

is that the human being (like God's being and unlike the beings of other things) is basically concerned about existence, and all other concerns are simply instrumental to this one. The fact of awareness of one's being (or one's being aware, which is the same thing) is the basic fact of human life and consciousness, for by this existential awareness gained through man's transcendental and reflective powers, man's being is radically distinguished from a parrot's or a horse's. Now, in some sense, this existential awareness of the concreted identity (as long as one is alive) of one's existence with one's essence is analogous to the existential transparency of God. That the essence of man is not his existence, but simply "lies in" his existence, is Heidegger's way of signifying the essentially existential (directed *towards* being and therefore creaturely) character of the human being. If Heidegger were making no distinction between essence and existence in man, he would not speak of the "priority of existence over essence,"<sup>9</sup> the essential finitude and mortality of man; he would not take such pains (cf. *Was ist Metaphysik?*) to stress the negative aspect of reflective existence. Heidegger, in short, intended to disclose the basic self-concern within all consciousness, the priority (already-there-ness) of the existent being, and the essential potential-

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ty for concerning oneself properly or improperly with oneself. Man can exist improperly and unauthentically; God cannot.

The condition of self-concern, or reflectivity, contains another element in it: negativity. "The character of man's being is essentially determined by what he is *not*, his nothingness." The full connotation of Heidegger's emphasis on nothingness may be appreciated by listing the several kinds of negativity or nothingness in human nature: (1) The existence of one man is separated from the existence of another (I am *not* you). (2) The existence of man is *not* essential (man can die at any time). (3) The existence of man is *not* complete even while he exists (I am *not* what I can be). The kind of being (or existence) I am is an existence containing its negation (death) within it, and whether I wish to or not, I go forward always toward my death. (4) At the same time, I do *not* quite *know* that being that I am, but feel it. My self-concern, my awareness that I am, is *not* defined or transparent; it is not comprehensible. (5) Conscious and unconscious reflection is *not* a whole. It is a series of transcendings.

I can merely direct myself towards myself, and the conceptual emptiness of this existential movement is suggested either by the dreadful awareness of my death (*not* of my existence) or by some inversion such

as narcissism. And "only because *nothing* definite is disclosed in the ground of man's being can the full friendlessness of being come over us." Only where the friendlessness of being oppresses us do we awake forlorn and start wondering, and only on the ground of wondering—that is, on the disclosure of the rift in our existence—springs forth the continual "why?" of creation. When we look into ourselves, we see just nothing, and the deepest darkness of our finitude fortifies a resolve to be all the more concerned about ourselves. We are *not* what we should be, *not* what we hoped to find. Above all, we both are and are not the self we reflect on.

There is an interior distance in thinking that human beings alone possess. And "without the primordial disclosure of negativity there can be no self-being and no freedom." "Nothing is the potentializing of the disclosure of being as such a one." "Nothing belongs originally to the nature of being itself." Being is essentially finite and negative; and only the being of man is *essentially* aware of this about itself. Being is *not* general but particular; it is *this* being or *that* being. This is why my being is defined by its existence, its mere *that-ness* towards which all awareness is directed, and against the backdrop of which all human activities take place. *For* me are all the things I am aware of; they are "at hand," and their



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reference to me is given not by them but by me. In man being and nothing belong together, not because they both agree in indefiniteness and immediacy, but because man's being itself is essentially finite, and only stands out (exists) in the transcendence implied in his negativity.

Man's finitude and inner negativity are the conditions both of his separation from other beings with which he finds himself, and of his awareness of them as over against him. "In being contained in nothing [that is, in being independent] man is already outside his being. This being-outside we call transcendence. If man did not fundamentally transcend his own essence, that is, if he did not hold himself within nothing, he could never relate himself to beings, not even his own." It is my awareness of my not being continuous with all being but being other, finite, that is the possibility of my realizing the nature of other beings and my own. It is in this sense that man is a transcendental being, and his "transcendence constitutes self-hood." "We call that which man transcends, the world, and define transcendence as being-in-the-world." But "world is no definition of the being which man is essentially *not*, but a character of man himself." World is the "given" of sense and experience; it is the fact of experience itself and the connectedness of fact. Only by rising above the

“given” can man view himself in action. The essentially worldly character of consciousness, the togetherness of subject and object, is characteristic of human life. That for the sake of which one thinks is what we call “world,” and whether it corresponds to the “real world” or not is a senseless question: of course, it does.

The human being is defined by a freedom for disclosure of self transcending self (and in transcending is in a condition for recognizing other selves and non-selves). The self-transcendence of the human mind is its basic condition, and from an understanding of its implications there can arise some appreciation of human ends. “Freedom is the ground of the ground”; man’s own spontaneity is the possibility for all essential disclosure. And if man’s existence is questionable, if he can ask why—“Why being and not nothing?” (Heidegger), it is because he is *free* to do so. “Man as existing transcendence, abounding in possibilities, is a creature of distance, and only through primordial distances, which he pictures to himself in his transcendence over all beings, enters genuine proximity to things.” The interior distance of human nature (of what we are, over against what we are not; of what we can be, over against what we are; of the fact that we are, over against the fact that we are such and such; of our living dissolution, over

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against our striving to be more real; of our reflection, over against its "given") is constantly present to consciousness or can be realized in consciousness, and furnishes the ground (the aspect of which is freedom) for our rising above other beings which are ontologically distant even if physically very near, to view and judge as if from nearby what may be physically far off.

Man can consider more than he can see; he can rise above the "given" world or the "real" world which was the original of the mirrored "given" world. Man can suppose what he has not directly known (even the "real" world), as, for example, Jesus of Galilee. Man can construct mathematical systems and instruments for his life and pleasure. All these capabilities imply a surmounting of the "given" and of man's being as well. And yet all transcendence is enacted for his own sake (and being), for an inner unconscious or indeliberate self-concern. Whatever dispositions an individual has for existing, for perfecting his being, for making himself most real to himself, all these are impelled at least by the innate surge for self-development, the most proper form of which is fully conscious and self-directed.

Heidegger observed that man's existential characteristic is to be ahead of himself, *before himself*; but this implies that he is *already there* before himself,

and this is what we mean by factuality. Man is factual (dejected, cast) as well as existential (projected, transcendent). Moreover, man is already there *with other beings*; and both he and other beings retreat before himself. As a being-with other beings, as finite, man is forced to pay attention to other things, and declines or falls away from (compromises with) his own being which he sees in reflection. His movement towards other beings is implicit in his finite nature, for he declines towards others just because he is not alone, and yet also because he is always alone in his continual self-inclining.

He can project himself out of himself onto others only because he is always projecting himself internally. The extent of the internal projection is as much a matter of choice as the extent of the external projection, and similarly, a man can no more be unaware of himself than he can be unaware of being-in-the-world. For being-in-the-world consists of being aware of a something "given" within the consciousness (which may or may not refer to the "real" world but which is a world of some sort), and of the awareness itself which is always in some manner reflexive. These three definitives of man's state, namely, (1) self-projection or disclosure, (2) factuality or dejection, and (3) decline or compromise or guilt, are the elementary notions of Heidegger's fundamental on-

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tology. The fact of existence (his being) is that man is already there in the world before his consciousness at any moment, and he looks back or down at himself, as from a distance. The essence of man—sometimes called by Heidegger *Existenz*—his creatureliness, is that there is a distance within his unity or identity, and both man's hope and man's fate lie in his choice of a mode of bridging this distance. As cast into the world (a mere being) man is naturally "guilty," and must make something of himself, retrieve himself. As a running impulse towards self-development (transcendence), he is free. Man's self-projection and his decline lie in, and therefore can arise from, the initial self-concern of his being. That he has to translate this self-concern into a projection into the world, and thereby realizes his responsible position as a being-in-the-world, is the cause of his being able to fall away from himself almost entirely and thus exchange his internal self-concern for external concerns of one sort or another. Sociability is but one sign of the self's impersonal decline. Just because man is finite, one being among others, he can forget himself and think of others; but in forgetting himself, in failing to become as aware as possible of his underlying self-concern, man tries to evade his primal condition and the full disclosure consequent to it. "The basic act of the metaphysics of man is a remembrance." If man is

guilty, it is because he can remember what he should be.

The three conditions for the disclosure of a person are paralleled by three modes of disclosure: understanding, feeling, and compromise. Understanding is the peculiarly human mode of projection. "Understanding is the existential being of man's own being able to be," for understanding is the form of projection, of being-ahead-of-himself. And "understanding is always accompanied by feeling," while "feeling has its understanding." Feeling is an existential ground principle in which the being-there is its "there." Feeling has a direction, but itself represents the factuality of the experience. One feels strongly about something, "because that's the way it is." Feeling makes it clear *how* one is; it indicates the reception of the "given," of the "there." Feeling indicates the value we place on something, how it appears to us, what it is worth to us, in short, its relevance. Understanding tells us what the true characteristics of anything are, and by understanding we get beneath the world we have apprehended. In the same way, we can *stand under* our own being. Because we are beings-with other beings, we have to turn away from our own being, and compromise to some extent our most vital self-concern. We can be concerned about others as if we were concerned

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about ourselves, or we can think of them as separated from our most vital concern and not important to us. Too much curiosity about others breeds contempt of dignity, for just as we are not merely interested in ourselves but uniquely concerned, so we should not forget that other selves are just as uniquely concerned about themselves.

"The wholeness of this structure (being-in-the-world) is revealed as care." And we mean by care "ahead-of-itself (existence), already-in (factuality), being-with (compromise)." Care is care about oneself as finite, as a being unto death. The awareness of the inescapable probability of death is the reason for a focusing of self on self. Man dies alone, "by himself," and he cannot share his death with other beings. It is the phenomenological condition of his selfhood. "Death is the most proper possibility of man." "No one can take from another his dying." "As soon as a man comes to life he is old enough to die." "Death is a real possibility . . . with it man stands before himself in his most proper function . . . his death is the possibility of not being able to be himself any more." But in this sense man dies not just at the end but every day. "Man dies in the decline" from his own true being, in impersonalizing himself. But a man is free to be whatever he can be, and the initial symptom of this freedom is his "free-

dom unto death," his freedom to see himself as mortal, as a person who dies alone. Only after he has seen that will he see his possibilities of free decision in the world.

Care unto death comes to consciousness in dread (one of the two most elemental human feelings). The phenomenon of dread has often been misunderstood, especially by those who ask why Heidegger, that "sentinel of the null," has "arbitrarily" chosen dread and not rather love or some other feeling. Heidegger could reply that to understand what one means by love one must first understand dread, for love presupposes dread. Dread is the sense of self as finite (deathly), declining, in vital need of love. It is an intuition of the bottomless abyss of the self's isolation, of the guilty, secret turning away from the self, of "the flight of man before himself." What is before one in dread is the *not*-self, the world. Dread is the feeling which reminds one of what he is not or that he may not be. It is, therefore, the environment for the call to care. "Dread reveals in man his being-in-the-world, that is, his being free to choose himself." Dread is one of the two elemental intuitions of the self, of the unique, dying self. Dread discloses our "being-unto-death,"<sup>10</sup> that we "suspend in nothingness," that we live on the border line of self; and "in the bright night of the nothing of dread con-



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sists the primal disclosure of a being as being and not nothing." Dread is so terrible in its negativity that the self is, paradoxically, fortified by self-realization. "Then conscience speaks in silence," and "reveals itself as a call of care."

"Conscience calls us from our lostness in indifference (*das Man*)." We judge ourselves as guilty of ignoring ourselves; we are not just occasionally guilty but guilty permanently. Man as a being-in-the-world is essentially compromising, for he can never give himself enough time and attention. His inner being calls for more and more of both, and, even while he busies himself with his own concerns, he is warning himself that he is not busy enough. Conscience is silent, but it calls to care; the very being of man is care-full. Care demands decision—the Kierkegaardian choosing to choose oneself—and in his decision to be what because of his nothingness he cannot really be, that is, an infinitely real self, a man realizes that "man as such is guilty." The teleologically important question as to whether this "guilt" comes from some original sin against his Creator is irrelevant to philosophical analysis.

Man, living authentically, accepts himself fully and resolves to face his being, shot through with the nothingness of finitude, disparateness, and death. His loves and his pleasures cannot alter his condition, nor

can he redeem himself in any way. It is in this context that Unamuno asserted that "love is pity" for another doomed self. We can only love what we appreciate, and we can appreciate the similar doom of another's vitality. In our lonesomeness and finitude we reach out, hoping to extend our finitude and ape the infinite. We wish to lay hold of being, either by making it (or remaking it) in art, or by capturing the affections of another being as real (or as unreal) as ourselves. And our love of others has the same terrible intensity as our moment of dread; it is a "silent dreading, self-projection of one's own potential being"; it is decision and resolution.

What is the atmosphere of our caring? Under what guise does it come upon us? It comes in time, for "temporality is the sense of care." As existing ahead-of-ourselves we are futural; as already-there we are past; and as with-ourselves and others we are present. Our interior sense of time is the horizon of an understanding of being; our awareness of the passing and coming and presence of our being is the perpetual backdrop of our awareness of all reality.<sup>11</sup> Time provides "the most original unity of the care-structure." "Temporality makes possible the unity of existence."

The outlines of Heidegger's fundamental ontology are now drawn. Man exists—ontologically speak-

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ing—always ahead-of-himself, already-there, with-other-beings; his condition is defined as projected (roughed-out), factual (abandoned, a relic), and declining (compromised); the corresponding modes of his awareness are his understanding, his feeling, and his compromising indifference. His understanding is always ahead-of-himself and futural, his feeling refers to what is already-there and past, and his compromising has to do with the present. Man “has so many ends,” as Scheler said, and his “future is the primary time of his existentiality” (Heidegger).

There is a priority of existence over essence in that man’s being is always ahead-of-himself and futural; his factual essence is his already-being-there in the world with others. The final cause, and the existential striving which defines it, is the prior cause; and the necessity for coping with both factuality and decline can be regarded as instrumental to the infinite striving, or inversely, as selfish. The requirements of the factual, declining side of the self have no validity of their own, but just because man does *exist* factually, his self-concern must recognize, not neglect, his factuality. Man must keep ahead of himself, remembering *who* he is, not forgetting that he lives on the threshold of nothingness. The priority of existence over essence is confirmed by the resolution to strive to be a self whose consciousness is filled with reality and

untouched by negativity. But such a self man cannot become, and it is his special tragedy (the tragedy of his species) that he must try anyway. For Heidegger, as for his pupil Sartre, "man is a useless passion."

Heidegger's analysis does not and is not meant to prove that man is a being-for-God. As he himself has pointed out, this is not a phenomenological problem. But if man is *believed* to be a being-for-God, by virtue of his spirituality, then he can have hope of becoming the self he wants to be, in touch at last with a reality untainted by nihilism.

## THE NEW HUMANISM

*Sartre*

*Nothingness might save or destroy those who face it, but those who ignore it are condemned to unreality. They cannot pretend to a real life, which, if it is full of real risks, is also full of real promises.*

*Demetrios Capetanakis*

It has become a commonplace to remark that in England and America academic philosophy is incommensurable with the urgency of life. The philosopher, unlike the novelist or the psychoanalyst, seldom attracts public notice. In Europe, however, theorists have always been nearer—whatever the reason—to the common and human curiosity for explanations; in great social crises civilized men have turned more readily to those among them who have been holding down a prophetic role. Perhaps our own crises are less intense, less defined, and less omnipresent; perhaps we are merely not given to prophecy. In any

case, we are not, generally speaking, prepared to hear. But the existential nihilism of Heidegger—with its liberty for death—was not treason to the Nazi revolution of nihilism, and the desperate resisters of France also required a new stoicism to sustain them in a world where nothing could be depended on, where nihilism and patriotism stalked hand in hand. Jean-Paul Sartre,<sup>1</sup> a professor of philosophy, disciple of Heidegger, was ready with a theory of human life which would make little sense to people tanned with a California optimism, but which expressed the minimal sense of self-preservation in the minds of French intellectuals.

Although Sartre's existentialism commenced as a version of Heidegger's phenomenology of man, it has become identified for the general reader with existentialism as a whole. Sartre has succeeded where Kierkegaard most bitterly failed, in being able to speak to a sympathetic audience; Sartre unlike Kierkegaard has not had to practice the dubious luxury of attacking his audience in order to be noticed by them. The foundation for his messianic career had been well laid by Kierkegaard and other prophets of desolation, as well as by the physical and mental miseries of our generation. But Sartre strikes one—in the modern manner—more as a publicity agent than as a messiah, and his existentialism less a cult

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than a public utility secure enough to afford to give gratuitous information and counsel to consumers at large.

One must be a journalist to deal adequately—if this is possible—with Sartre; one must await the latest pronouncement from him or his collaborator, Simone de Beauvoir. Even Heidegger, who was Germany's most notorious professor before the war, never provided copy for the press. His books were few and exceedingly difficult; his philosophy consisted in analysis rather than pronouncement. The difference is important. The ethicism so much a part of Kierkegaard's existential dialectic became sublimated in Heidegger beneath phenomenologic analyses of human consciousness. In the third stage, in Sartre, ethics has come to the fore once again. Kierkegaard wanted to tell men what to be; Heidegger had only to tell men what they were—the Party had already told them what they were to be. Sartre alone has had the opportunity to tell men what to be; for him what men are is always what they are to be. And yet Sartre too began his career as an analyst of human consciousness, as a phenomenologist. His *L'Être et le néant*—the holy book of French existentialism—is almost a parody on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Sartre's sudden public appearance, however, obliged him to offer certain features only of his existentialism (as he himself

admits), only those active features which would appear to answer the inevitable public question: "What are we to do?" We see, therefore, in Sartre's writings, particularly in his plays and novels, aphorisms, commands, insights, rather than a connected discussion of human existence. We see in him an existentialism groomed for "involvement" in a weary world. The private disgust with existence characteristic of Sartre's prewar life was transformed during the underground fight against the Germans into a stoic heroism, and after the war into a militant humanism. As with Kierkegaard, the social context of Sartre's life was reflected in his work (Heidegger has remained throughout pathetically the same, and now in his maturity has written one more nihilistic essay, this time on nihilism itself).

Sartre is like Kierkegaard in another important respect: he understands the necessity for communicating indirectly to his audience. He knows that life can only be explained by more life, not by theories drawn from life. One form of Kierkegaard's antagonism to the Hegelian super-ontology was the attempt to retain the flavor of existence with the help of fiction and imagination, by setting up "objective correlatives" which would present rather than state. Kierkegaard felt that everything personal and contingent is—in any total way—incomprehensible and incommuni-



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cable, that the best one can do is to guess and suggest. Sartre likewise could not—even as a philosopher—be satisfied with philosophic, abstract communication. As a result he has written novels and plays. A philosophy of existence always runs the risk of turning men away from existence to thought; fiction and drama alone can guarantee life to thought, by representing particular men and women in particular situations. And yet the thought is embedded in the fiction and drama and must be extracted by the consumer if he is to profit and realize.

Sartre, like Bergson, Blondel, and Marcel, stresses the active over the static. Even his imperatives do not conceal his Kierkegaardian exasperation with complacency and quietism. He cannot stand any appeal to an authority beyond the individual's responsibility; his almost blatant atheism is an expression of his disgust at the reliance by some on values for which they themselves assume no immediate responsibility. His philosophy, consequently, is for lives that see themselves as desolate, forlorn, anxious. The man who chooses only what someone else has chosen for him is the man every existentialist distrusts; choices are dignified only by personal deliberation and ownership. If "it is in anguish that man becomes aware of his liberty," in anguish man becomes aware of himself in question. To be in question signifies that one has

not yet become what he can be. The feeling of vertigo which one experiences in moments of extreme tension—of the stomach as well as of the heart and mind—discloses a sense of chasm within one, between the situation one is in and the other side of the wall, death. Tension discloses polarization of the human being, separation, want, an emptiness to be filled; and only when one has experienced this chasmic feeling can he begin to understand what Sartre and others mean when they say, in aphorism, "Existentialism is a doctrine according to which existence precedes essence."

This sentence holds a hidden imperative and is not to be taken as a mere ontological formula. Strictly speaking, essence (the possibility of being) precedes existence (the actuality of being), but human beings are primarily concerned with the actuality of being and their feeling for "the little things" of life. What they can be is dependent on the fact that they are, and in moments of tension they may be reminded that their existence is quite fortuitous and on the edge of the precipice of reality. In such moments men sharply realize that they are free, "condemned to be free," free to bind themselves. Freedom is a feature of man's being, and we recognize this as we observe the more restricted growth of all other animals: only man can deal with novelties; only man can surprise.

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Existence—again speaking generally—does not con-note freedom: only human existence is free. But when a person becomes fully aware of the contingency of his being—which is what is meant by existence—he realizes that he is *essentially* free. Sartre expresses this by saying: “If existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus existentialism’s first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him.” Sartre speaks of man as a being who is constantly confronted by his future, by the “not yet” of reality, and who continually projects himself into a void which he fills by his planning. The essence of man is but a plan, a possibility as Heidegger would call it, which is continually being actualized and realized. A person grows by progressive integration.

Man cannot rest on his human nature; it is not enough just to be. One must be someone; one must make oneself continually in order to be real. One must make one’s self felt, throw one’s weight around. We recognize this need when we denounce lazy people as “good for nothing.” We are recognizing what Sartre means when he says, over and over, “Man makes himself. He isn’t ready-made at the start.” “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism.” “Man’s

destiny is within himself." "A man is what he wills himself to be." "Every man must find his own way out." "Action is the only thing that enables a man to live." "There is no reality except in action." "Reality alone is what counts."

Man cannot rest on his freedom, either; it is not enough to know that one is free to act. "I *am* my freedom," but I lose my freedom if I do nothing. To be free is to be free to change, to do, to act, to inflict oneself on the world, to change the world. Simone de Beauvoir clarifies Sartre's position when she says, "We hold that man is free: but his freedom is real and concrete only to the degree that it is committed to something." "It is in the nature of human existence to assert itself against the inertia of the given by dominating things, by invading them, by incorporating their structures into the world of man."<sup>2</sup> Not only must man not take himself for granted as a nature fully given, but he must also not take his relations to the world for granted. There is a necessity to act implied in his freedom; his freedom is not for nothing. A man cannot become the person he wants to be merely by thinking about himself, but only by doing something with himself. This requires involving himself in the affairs of others, in adapting himself to social pressures, in transforming his environment, "What counts is total involvement." The

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Heideggerian being-in-the-world (which de Ruggiero sarcastically calls Heidegger's "cemetery") comes to life in the Sartrean recognition of man's essential engagement to the world. Man is a social animal.

✓ Sartre thinks of the free man as more isolated than other beings just because he is free; like Kierkegaard and Heidegger he stresses the forlornness of the individual whose deepened consciousness has for the time being seemed to separate him from all others. The individual wants to be indispensable, wants to be recognized; he wants to immortalize himself. He is put in a world which he has to make sense of, and which offers him neither help nor solace. "Man is forlorn because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself." He cannot even live unless he or some other free being does something for him. He starts life by instinctively willing to live—we call this self-preservation—and the energy to persist gradually transforms itself into an energy to persist as someone, as man and as an individual man. He not only chooses to live, he chooses to live as a person with a certain body, memories, desires, feelings, thoughts, relations to others, as a named man. A man's most fundamental choice is of himself. And yet what one wants for oneself, one wants for everyone. If one man is free, everyone must be. This is

another way of explaining the sentence, "One cannot be free in a vacuum." Free men require free men; or, as Simone de Beauvoir has said, "I am flung into the world amid these alien liberties. . . I have need of others." "No man is an island," although it is out of the feeling for oneself as an island that existentialism with its imperative for responsible action springs. "Life," as Sartre likes to repeat, "begins on the far side of despair."

Once a man has become self-conscious in this sense, he is morally obliged to act in no way that will deaden his preoccupation with his integrity. He is obliged to impregnate all his actions with some sense of their relevance to him, as a man and as a person. We are talking of this when we require someone to "put himself into his work." There can be a mutual gain for self and others through intense living. When I choose to be, I choose to be myself; I choose being in the guise of myself. This is the basic choice, an expression on the free conscious plane of a basic human energy or drive which originates and subsists in planes below consciousness. "Choice is choice of being, either directly or through appropriations of the world. Thus my liberty is choice of being God; and all my acts, all my projects translate this choice and reflect it in thousands of ways." Sartre, the atheist, recognizes the God-directed energy within man, the

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lust for life in the guise of *my* life, the preference for existence rather than thought, actuality rather than possibility (although through and with possibility). But for Sartre this energy is vain; hence man's life is essentially free for nothing; "man is a useless passion."

According to Sartre, "Desire is the being of human reality." But desire of what? Most profoundly, "Desire is originally desire of being." Or as Simone de Beauvoir expresses it, "My end is to attain being . . . to seek to be is to seek *the* being: for there is only being by virtue of a subjectivity which veils it." Sartre is well aware that he is miming Christian dynamics when he supposes that "man wants to be *ens causa sui*." "Human reality is pure effort to become God." "All human reality is a passion . . . the passion of man is inverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain." This is why "man is a useless passion." But even though man does not become *the* being, God, we might question whether the philosopher is justified in asserting that man's passion for being is in vain. It would be more proper, perhaps, to say that the "appearances" are against man.

If Sartre's pessimism is presented only as a description of the apparent human condition, one can then accept Simone de Beauvoir's paraphrase of "useless

passion": "It is significant of the 'trial' described by Kafka that no verdict is ever closed, we live in a condition of indefinite compounding. The important thing is not to lose, but we never win. We have to undertake our activities in uncertainty and risk, and it is exactly there that the essence of liberty lies."<sup>3</sup> The new stoicism like the old commands man to "look within," to recognize the universal in him, but unlike the old stoicism the new cannot believe that "no natural desire is in vain." The new stoicism is designed not only to confront external desolation but the powerful, contradictory root impulse from within as well. In anguish man will see himself, his contradictory condition, and his freedom to act "as if" he were God. Sartre begs men to "accept [their] freedom, accept [their] anguish, and [they] will find that real life begins on the far side of despair."

When he speaks of desire as the being of human reality, he has not forgotten that men desire specific things as well as themselves and *the* being. He supposes a certain dynamic polarity of desire which every existentialist expresses in one way or another: compare Kierkegaard's dialectic of choice, Heidegger's phenomenology of care, Rousselot's rhythm of love. As Sartre puts it, "We are in the presence of a double determination of desire: on the one hand, desire is determined as desire of being a certain being



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who is in-self for-self, and whose existence is ideal; on the other hand, desire is determined in the immense majority of cases as relation with an in-self, contingent and concrete, of which it projects appropriation." One desires one's own self (remember that subjectivity veils the desire for being as such), and one desires other beings. Sartre asks himself whether the two desires are compatible, reconcilable. Are we in the presence of separate impulses, or a double function of one and the same? His answer is that "these two desires, which one can distinguish analytically, are inseparable in reality: one does not find any desire of being which is not duplicated by a desire of having and vice versa; it acts in two directions of attention for the same end." We make a "detour through the world" in order to confer being on ourselves. In order to be ourselves we must possess ourselves; in order to possess others we must act, release ourselves amid "alien liberties." "Having, making, and being are the cardinal categories of human reality. They subsume under them the whole conduct of man." But "doing or making is reducible to having," for doing or making is just a form of having.

Possession is instrumental to being. We need others in order to be ourselves. Our desires are manifold and apparently contradictory, but they are compatible: the desire of self veils the desire of being—of God—

the desire to make, act, and possess veils the desire to do all for oneself, for the perfection of one's being. "I am what I have," says Sartre, and here he is summing up the meaning of the existential formula, "Existence precedes essence." Like every other existentialist, religious as well as atheistic, tragic as well as dynamic, he sees a basic human concern for the person as the starting-point of human endeavor and as the goal towards which every form of concern, care, desire, love tends. The essence of man is what *has been* (has being, has to be, *avoir etre*),<sup>4</sup> and "it is all that one can indicate of human being by the words, 'It is.'" Not only does the essence wait on existence as possession is the detour to being, but even more, "the act is always beyond this essence; it is a human act only in as much as it passes all explanation." Existence cannot be perceived or explained; it is just there sustaining the essence, keeping it real. Every real act passes through the circuit into the clear light of perceivable, explainable things, and back again to its terminal, the existent, energetic self. We can *speak* of ourselves only as having been, having being; but we *know* that we are. This underlying, seldom-expressed certainty of self-existence is the condition and the terminal of all human energies and desires. "The essence lies in the existence."

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VI

INTERIORIZED SCHOLASTICISM

*Rousselot*

*The human soul has not found itself; it is looking for itself; and this kind of absence of itself from itself is the essential sign signifying the state of being on the way, tending towards God. Pierre Rousselot<sup>1</sup>*

Existentialists, like other philosophers, are jealous of their theories and are apt to regard new brands of existentialism as infringements of property rights. Although at one time to be an existentialist was to be a Christian reformer (cf. Karl Barth), after the first world war existentialism was deeded to German university faculties, where, by the law of averages, it would have remained had not the times we live in and the personal success of Jean-Paul Sartre made it a Parisian fad, quite as noisy and slick as Freudianism or Marxism. We cannot, therefore, expect atheistic

existentialism or the literary advance guard to be exceedingly pleased or concerned over a scholastic reminder that existentialism, which in itself is neither atheistic nor religious, can make good use of a neo-scholastic theory of the energies of the soul.

Most people think of existentialism not only as a serious doctrine but on the whole as a not very cheerful one, and it is useless to deny that its best-known exponents tend to stress the tragic limits of man's existence rather than his indwelling energies which exhibit him as a life rather than a structure. True, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre all emphasize the "priority of existence over essence" in terms of some inner dialectic of life or consciousness, but they have not adequately underlined this basic dynamic feature of life, and existentialism's first principle; rather they have mapped, as an archaeologist an ancient ruin, the human condition in terms of its more noticeable moments; death, anguish, choice, freedom, time, care. These are, to be sure, to existentialism what the ten categories are to Aristotelian logic, but they are themselves thoroughly intelligible only when seen as forms and moments of some radical movement of life within a man. Life is a movement and can only be approached through some appreciation—no matter how fumbling—of its characteristic motions. Such an insight belongs to contemporary dy-

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namic psychology as well as to existentialism, and at a later date an unbiased comparison of the two should be attempted.<sup>2</sup> Such an insight belonged to Rousselot and his disciples.

Pierre Rousselot (who died in 1915) was a French Jesuit who, while alive, attracted attention in neo-scholastic circles by the vigorous reasoning of his two doctoral dissertations: *L'intellectualisme de S. Thomas* and *Pour le problème de l'amour au moyen âge*. In three little-known essays, "Amour spirituel et synthèse aperceptive," its sequel, "L'Etre et l'esprit," and "Métaphysique thomiste et critique de la connaissance," he began to give expression to what he himself called "an interiorized scholasticism."

Rousselot thought of himself as a Thomist, an interpreter of the psychology, metaphysics, and theology of the "angelic doctor." His voice was, however, distinctively his own, and his theory of love still provides controversial matter for Thomists. He was a contemporary of Bergson, Blondel, and Proust, and like them—not because of them—was intensely aware of the activity of life and consciousness. Consequently, all his philosophical efforts were directed at understanding the real fusion of life and consciousness, love and intelligence. Unlike Heidegger, who summarily rejected all ready-made ontologies and

then set out to find a new one, Rousselot merely hoped to interiorize the metaphysical principle of Thomas. He was neither an intellectualist nor a voluntarist, and his view of intelligence does not consist in any simple-minded antithesis of will and intellect. He valued equally the two chief psychological functions, the abstractive and the dynamic, and he sought to reconcile them by a dynamism of love (desire, joy, and possession). His initial expression of this intellectual and loving dynamism is contained in his aphorism: "The intelligence is essentially the sense of the real, but it is the sense of the real because it is the sense of the divine."

By "intelligence" Rousselot means the totality of human awareness, and he distinguishes—although not too clearly—desire, knowledge, and emotion as the components of intelligence as a whole. In addition, he distinguishes—by use—intelligence from its most intense form, love. In order to avoid dilemmas arising out of a misunderstanding of the ambiguity of Thomistic terminology, one must therefore keep these distinctions in mind and observe how certain words like "love" or "intellect" or "will" are used, instead of merely noticing which word is used. One will have to make the same effort Rousselot himself made to translate Thomistic jargon into distinc-



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tions more congenial to our present attitudes. In this way, we may be able to by-pass unreal controversies, such as the one on love and the intellect.

The word "love" has always been used with different meanings, that is, either as a term referring to the totality of caring, or as desiring, or as enjoying, or as possessing. Rousselot and other neo-scholastics are not always consistent in their uses of this and other words, and if one follows their terminology literally, he finds it impossible to escape walking into traps. I shall give an example. When Rousselot postulates a loving intellectualism, he does not merely mean that in one sense love is prior to knowing and in another sense knowing is prior to loving; his theory cannot, therefore, either be explained or corrected by the Thomistic formula for the interactivity of will and intellect.<sup>3</sup> For Rousselot (and Guthrie also) ascribed cognition to the act of love, and in doing so gave undisputed priority to apprehension over volition. Rather he wished to point out that human awareness (intelligence), which features its special element, rational awareness, is itself a power, a movement, a form of life, energy. For this reason, intelligence or rational awareness is more correctly understood through its most pulsating form, love or care. This is a fair request, in as much as any act of awareness involves willing (desire, energy), possessing (intel-

lect), and feeling (emotion)—all three. The more intense the unity of these three elements, the more we know; the more intense our sense of reality is, the more alive we can be said to be.

Rousselot begins his discussion of intelligence with a critique of those high-grade products of awareness called universals or abstractions. (We sometimes call them "mere abstractions.") "Abstraction and human affirmation are justified because they are in an inferior world the natural exercise of a being who in spite of everything is spirit; because they are the efforts of the intelligence mixed with sense to supply the pure idea, to simulate the direct intuition of ourselves." We manufacture, with the aid of sense impressions, imitations of reality, imitations of the simple, immediate awareness we would have if we were not obliged by our nature to sift all individuality from our sense impressions. The universal residue we call ideas, notions, abstractions. Rousselot is commenting on a fact of our make-up when he asserts that "to possess another, is to possess oneself." The more quiescent our sensibility, the more sodden we feel. And yet, conversely, "One must know oneself in order to know being as such." There is an interchange of benefits between knowledge of ourselves and knowledge of all else. Or, in more homely language, as we are, so we know. Knowledge is in some way com-

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mensurate with our being: the mode of knowing follows the mode of being.

But what is the mode of being of man? What is his status? Man is composite, both material and spiritual. That is, he is material or corporeal in as much as he is enclosed, and spiritual in so far as he can dis-close himself. "Being is double: material and immaterial. By being material, which is restrained, each thing is only that which it is. But by being immaterial, which is ample and almost infinite, not being limited by matter, a thing is not only that which it is, it is also other things in some way." By this distinction we can express the wider gulf between nonhuman animals and angels. The former are only what they are, a bobtailed cat or a blue lobster, and cannot assimilate any other thing without destroying it; the latter are whatever they intuit through assimilation of the forms of the objects of their intuition. The distinction Rousselot has in mind is not merely one of matter and form (determinable and determinant), for although angels are spoken of as forms and all other beings (other than God) as composites of matter and form, the distinction of form and matter alone will not serve to differentiate man from the rest of nature.

Man, a composite of form and matter, resembles angelic beings—and is unlike the rest of nature—in

that men are in some sense immaterial as well as material. To put it in Heidegger's language, man can "transcend" himself; he is not doomed to be himself and this alone. His dignity, as Pico della Mirandola observed in *The Dignity of Man*, is to be capable of everything. For remaining what he is, restrained by the individuation of his body, man can reach out of himself, draw others formally within him, make things, imagine over time and distance. In short, man is "a creature of distance" (Heidegger). His transcendentality, his capability of extending his environment in space and time, is entirely different from the behavior observed in other animals which never wander, except accidentally. Even migrating birds are regulated by things in nature outside them, which they, by nature, respond to. Man's noetic transcendentality, therefore, must come from a different principle of reality than that materiality which represents necessity and restraint. Transcendence is what has always been called spirit, and it is man as spirit, and therefore free, that Rousselot—and Kierkegaard and Heidegger—names a person.

Man as spirit is man as a person, for personality is to be distinguished from the mere individuality of nonhuman beings (nontranscendental beings) by the freedom to assimilate and invent. Even if each man is individuated by a material principle,<sup>4</sup> his body, his

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human nature, requires this individuation to be specially humanized, that is, spiritualized. Human individuality is personality,<sup>5</sup> and in man individuality and personality are one and the same. A man is not a man unless he is a person. "There are two sorts of being, those which matter contracts and constrains into being only themselves, those which can be others in some manner." Man is the latter, spiritual and thereby personal. "The more intense his life, the less restrained in himself. The possession of the other, far from being opposed to immanence, increases and decreases with it." "His natural end is to realize in him the power of spirit, to attain a maximum of awareness, to become a monad reflecting everything." And it is both the force and nobility of human consciousness that it is apprehensive.

How complete is man's spirituality? He is a "spirit imperfectly spiritual who desires to possess himself." "Man is essentially a spirit whose hypostasis is unequal to its nature, a spirit incompletely spiritual; he does not yet feel himself as all spirit, all for God; he has to get there by progress and exercise; he has to gain his soul by the use of the sensible world, which is for him both a restriction and a means." The nature of anything is that characteristic defining its community with some other things. But everything is one of a kind, an individual within a species. With

reference to human nature, every individual human being is called a subject (hypostasis or person), and "because in things composed of matter and form, the nature or essence must differ from the suppositum . . . hence the reality which is a man has something in it that humanity does not have."<sup>6</sup>

Man has a spiritual nature, and therefore every person—even though individuated by his body, his material principle—is spiritual as well as corporeal. But every man knows that he is not as much of a man as he would like to be; the potentialities of humanity are never entirely actualized in any one person. The person, so to speak, is a limited application of the natural and spiritual principle of humanity. Not only is he never all he personally can be, he is never all that human nature allows. Every person (hypostasis) is both spiritually capable and materially self-contained. A struggle, therefore, goes on within the self to break the unbreakable bonds of materiality and flood the soul with uniqueness. And "as long as the soul is not released from its material potentialities, as long as it has not become entirely congruent with its nature, this anxiety abides and moves it from within. It is the desire of self whose disquieting restriction keeps in captivity the pure desire of God." Even in examining—and often triumphing over the real world or the symbolic world of the mind—the

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soul is vaguely aware that it is really looking not for this thing or that pattern but for something transcendental, which may give meaning to everything else. Every man searches for the all-sufficient meaning of life, mind, and reality. But no matter how wonderful the achievement, there is no experience which does not end in the birth of a new restlessness. Man, as Augustine said, is an exile on his way home. His "soul lives on the thread of disquietude" (Rousselot). He is essentially anxious.

To return for a moment to the attainments of consciousness. What does man want to know? Only abstractions? Only the mental siftings of real things? Or does he not rather want to know all there is to be known? But what is there to be known, and can we know it all? We sense that everything we come across is individuated; but what we see with our minds, and what we say we see, is not the signature of individuation in things but the form or face, the generality signifying something that one thing has in common with another. The mind, thus, operates primarily in terms of likenesses which it recognizes and then names. Even real differences have to be thought of in terms of likenesses (tea is unlike coffee in the formality which all tea has which is not the formality that all coffee has), or in terms of a nexus, or group, or number of likenesses, as when we describe

a person with words, each of which applies to many other persons. But that principle of materiality which makes the form possible, and which limits the form to this tea or that coffee, we are aware of only inferentially, not immediately, but by its very absence. And its absence to our mind's eye speaks louder than words. The human mind can see the insufficiency (that is, it does not have its own principle of sufficiency within it) of what it does see, even while it cannot see the particular principle which conditions what it does see. The human mind as essentially questioning, seeking underlying conditions and causes, is limited to supposing what actually is not clearly present to it, but which would "make sense" of what is clearly present.

The soul is intuitive but imperfectly (its recognition of similars is a sort of intuition). But man does not intuit anything in the entirety of its composition, and thinking employs two elementary operations, recognition (intuition of similars) and supposition (inference). For this reason, we speak of a person understanding but not comprehending (we can comprehend forms as such: what we know, we know). But not only does the "thing itself" finally escape us, not only do we never really get inside another person, above all we cannot wholly get inside ourselves. We are "there," but somehow separated and in the last



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analysis unattainable. The internal distension of our ideas corresponds to man's interior distance which separates existence from essence. The "deep root of the conceptual distension" is planted in the "inadequacy of the hypostasis to its essence, individuality restraining nature." "The root of abstraction is in this absence of self outside oneself."

In what way is there a separation of existence and essence? First of all, "In every creature the essence differs from the being and is compared to it as potentiality is to act."<sup>7</sup> In man, the separation of hypostasis and nature defines the separation of existence and essence, but the distinctions do not wholly correspond. In God, essence and existence are the same. His nature is his being, is to be. In angels, being is limited by the angelic essence which is dependent on God's creation. Their essence stands for the kind of being they are, but not for the actuality of their being. God's kind of being is his reality. In human nature, the essence stands for the kind of being man is, and, as in angels, not for the actuality of the being. Man's existence is, therefore, essentially conditional and terminable. His essence is indifferent (potential) to being, in so far as the essence itself is created by God and is disintegrated by the instability of matter. The angel's essence is created by God but is not disintegratable by matter, but stabilized by form.

Such is the "grand line of Thomist metaphysics," and we can find an empirical correspondence. My existence is definitely conditional and temporary, for it is my nature to exist while I exist, but not to exist forever. My existence is not self-sustained but depends on the universe with its contingency and its necessary interconnections with me. Not only am I not self-subsistent, I have never known a self-subsistent being (although I may suppose one: God). Even while actual, I hold within myself the possibility (even the necessity) of some day not being. I am thus separable in my root, and it is no wonder that I am distracted in my thoughts, and that my life is never what it ought to be. *What* I am, my essence, is not to exist but only to be whatever I exist as, both species and individual. Existence itself is a gift, a "given" which we do not ask for, and for which we are not always thankful. Existence is the actualization of *my* essence, and it is this fact of existence which (although it is contentless) is the true wonder of reality. "Why *being* and not rather nothing?" (Heidegger).

The ontological basis of human consciousness has been spoken of as a distension of essence and existence, and the limitations of knowledge are assumed to follow from it. At least, one may admit a curious correspondence of noetic intention and performance with

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the genuine but limited spirituality of a being whose essence is always potential with regard to the fullness of existence. Lest the experience of existential limitation (the restraint of the individual body imposed upon the commonwealth of human nature) be supposed to be viewed only in relation to a narrowly conceived abstractive consciousness, let us now follow Rousselot's exposition of the dynamism of life and consciousness as a whole.

"Every bit of knowledge is defined by love." "Intelligence is the expression of a desire." "Desire governs knowledge interiorly." "Perfect knowledge is identical with love." This group of maxims testifies to Rousselot's giving an extraordinary role to love, and it brings to mind the scholastic controversy of will versus intellect. Intellect and will are of course in some sense rivals, but each is more important than the other according to some one aspect. Will, the governing faculty; moves the intellect from within (as an intrinsic efficient cause). But the intellect moves the will also, that is, if you call "moving" that informing activity by which the particular object of the will is specified. The will is blind, if one means by this that it does not (by definition) apprehend the particular object of willing. On the other hand, the will tends naturally towards what is good for man, and being-as-good is its object or end. Any

particular willing involves finding a particular being which will be the means (secondary good) for man's primary end. The apprehensive power of the mind thus has precedence over other powers (willing and feeling) by lighting up the goal and accompanying the willing self along its path. It has been said that the object of the intellect (being) is superior to the object of the will (good); but is being exclusively the object of the intellect? Or is being rather the object of consciousness as a whole?

Human living is above all rationally conscious living (including the subconscious and unconscious) in contradistinction to the sensitively conscious living of other animals or the nonconscious actuality of non-living beings. Both kinds of conscious living have a base in potency, movement, striving, tending, energy; and rationally conscious living overlays this energy by a free and complex act. The heart of awareness is freely energetic (free because its particular object or end is prescribed, not innately and by its own nature but by the roving eye of apprehension), but its characteristic is not a movement towards but a receiving. The question really is: what is received? Being? No, not being, but being-as-something, that is, as an idea or form. The object of consciousness viewed as something received is not being but the what-ness of being. Granted that being is the ground of its own what-

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ness, it is still true that the being-ness itself (the existent) is not graspable except as some kind of being. The fact or act of existence is inferred; it is not apprehended. In like manner, the heart of awareness, the willing, the striving, goes out towards being, but its actual object is being-as-for-oneself. (And according to this egocentric origin of "good" as being-for-oneself, one then translates the interdependence of external things as good for each other.) In this connection we may remark that Thomas Aquinas restricted the scope of his *De Ente et Essentia* to the realm of being as categorial, and did not elaborate on being as existential.<sup>9</sup>

Another scholastic distinction between intellect and will is sometimes made in terms of their types of activity (the first comparison being of their interactivities, the second, of their objects). Intellect as possessing is superior to will as mere tending to possession. But here again we should be cautious. Is it not better to know material things, it has been suggested, than to love them? And is it not better to love God than to have remote knowledge of him? Yes, and if one follows Rousselot, "What finally illumines intellectual perception is love of God." And of persons we may similarly ask, is it not better to love them (that is, sense their personality and loveliness) than to apprehend them only formally? We

have some communicable knowledge of other persons—usually what they want us to know about them; we know something of their bodies and even love their bodies for the sake of their spirit (unless we are perverse). We try to guess their characters by observing behavior, but who can say we comprehend even our loved ones in this way? Rather, is it not true that the more we know of them the more we realize there is to know? The more we love, the more we know; and when we see (noetically) little to love, we neither love nor know much. Do not all persons—human and divine—in some way share this aspect of incomprehensibility? Or should one say that human beings are in their potentiality, that is, essentially, incomprehensible, thereby miming the incomprehensibility of God's actuality (existence)?

We have compared intellect and will in their three common aspects of interaction, objects, types of action; and no impartial judge can give a clear-cut priority to either one. They are different functions of one life and consciousness, and together they form interlocking aspects of the life of reason. Such an analysis of the main components of conscious life does not immediately suppose the ontological distension which we have already dealt with. It is only when one singles out one aspect or the other (as, for example, abstractive thought and sensing) that the ques-

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tion of distension and priority enters the realm of psychology—unless one follows Rousselot still further and distinguishes between “the two loves that draw the soul along.”

Rousselot's theory of man embraced not only the three forms of distension (of being, knowing, and loving), but their principle of unity and correspondence. The distension of knowing (sensing singulars and abstracting universals) arises from the make-up of our nature, from a distension of being. We are now ready to examine the distension of loving or caring.

Man as a “being of care” is not simple; he can care about an infinite number of things. These can be reduced to three directions of care: self (actual), self-development (potential), and God (original). Every day we concern ourselves about a variety of things, ideas, and persons. But why? And in what respect are we concerned? We are concerned because we have to, and because we are able to. As human beings we have natural requirements to fulfill, ideals to pursue, possibilities to be gone into, and all these concerns are prescribed and circumscribed by our nature. The fulfillment of our nature is the goal of our striving.

But more perceptive or reflective men and women realize that in subserving the “cause” of human

nature (their general essence) they are at the same time serving the cause of their own person. What they care about is not humanity exclusively (or at all), but themselves. In this way there is a caring within caring, and "the desire which the soul has of itself gives intellectual perception its clarity." "One must know oneself in order to know truth as such." The love of self actuates the love of humanity. "We can compare human life to a stream which flows to the ocean and at the same time by its own motion makes a floating island which instead of perishing grows ever more beautiful as a piece of nature. The love of self is not swept away by the love of God, it forms a nucleus which develops ever more richly its own form, the greater the sweep of love beyond it. The love of self is a true love; it is necessary for the permanent selfhood and splendor of our finite beauty."<sup>10</sup> A third form of caring (although some may call this delusion) is man's care for God. This too is natural (if only a natural delusion) to man's spirituality and his distension. What he anxiously expects is not the unrolling of his own efficiency but a sufficiency from beyond him, beyond nature; and this is the design for human love. "To be a person is to be essentially in search of a person. Love presupposes knowledge but it can to some degree do without it; what it needs is the living and actual being itself" (Philippe de la



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Ste. Trinité). The love of God can give meaning to human love. "The desire of God is the dynamic and active element of knowledge; man knows things only in so far as he desires God" (Rousselot). "But if it is only to win God that it wishes to win itself, it is only to win itself and not any external thing that it strives and multiplies in the pursuit of its being on earth." Together, both "love of God and love of self justify the pretenses of our earthly speculation. . . Want of God and want of self explain our weakness." A profound self-caring gropes down to the inner root of spiritual conflict, which has so many external symptoms, and fosters humility instead of selfishness. Moreover, "between love of God and love of self there is a deep but secret identity which makes for the double expression of one and the same desire,"<sup>11</sup> for even in the disclosure of our want it is the want of self which is translated as a want of God.

Rousselot has summed up his insight into "the two loves which draw the soul along" in a famous passage which has been the inspiration of Guthrie's polarity of existentialism and essentialism, and D'Arcy's theory of *eros* and *agape*, which is the boldest attempt to explain the existential dialectic of human energies: *In so far as it translates the sensible given into a something, into essence, the soul is desiring itself and wishes to realize itself as humanity; in so far as it af-*

*firms that being exists, it wishes to realize itself as being and desires God. These two loves are not external to one another; the love of God is internal to the love of self; it is its soul. And it is the source of our intellectual vision. If the soul is sympathetic to being as such, it is because it is capable of God.*<sup>12</sup> The existential love (of one's own being and of God) is at the same time both efficient and final cause of the essential love (of one's humanity and of the cosmos). It is the desire of self [as essential] whose troubling restriction maintains captive the pure [existential] desire of God." An unreflective life of philanthropy or adventure is probably nothing less than a "blind" for a pulsing yearning for self-possession. But a self-possession blind to the basic insufficiency of the self is ridiculous and pathetic, and has its own symptoms of hollowness and vain fixation. On the other hand, an inordinate respect for some particular achievement can be transformed by giving all one's potentiality free rein, and thrusting the whole self into the world: "To the things themselves!"

The ideal of the soul is harmony, as Plato has told us, but one must never forget (and this is the basic ethical imperative) that an ideal implies its want, and, in particular, that man is a separated being. In both Kierkegaard and Heidegger we have taken notice of the fact of separation and its consequences in

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the psychic plane. In addition, we have noted Rousselot's insistence on a priority within a priority (care for self as existent preceding care for self-development, care for being or God preceding care for self as existent). In one of his last essays (*Amour spirituel et synthèse aperceptive*), Rousselot returned to his original thesis that "the intelligence is the sense of the real because it is the sense of the divine," and added: "This formula is incomplete; we must insert the sense of the self." The sense of the self—even if we are sensible enough to have it—is camouflage for the sense of the divine, just as the sense of reality in all its freshness and splendor camouflages the unique unfolding of the self. In return for admitting the priority of the sense of the divine, the self expands, and its sense of reality becomes more and more nearly intuitive and happy. "The sense of the divine is necessarily a capacity for conscious transparency, a capacity for pure delight in oneself. The created spirit finds itself in the measure in which it finds God."

Rousselot—and the Thomistic Christian philosophy as a whole—uncovers the last spiritual spring of self-caring in the self's creaturely care for God. Heidegger's tragic existential dynamism corresponds to but one phase of Christian existentialism, namely, the priority of self-caring ("authentic") over impersonality ("unauthentic"). The third and underly-

ing movement of the self is its care for existence (being, God) as such, and this movement sets the other two going and keeps them in motion. Kierkegaard's distinction of the three practical stages of life (aesthetic, ethical, religious), with a priority of ethical over aesthetic, and religious over ethical, divides the human condition analogously. The test for existentialism consists in being able to point to a priority of existential caring over essential caring; the test for Christian existentialism—or Christian anthropology—consists in being able to point to a double priority of care or love such as is made explicit in Rousselot's writings.

## VII

# THE NOSTALGIA FOR EXISTENCE

*Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*  
*Augustine*

The same theory of the two loves (existential and essential) was uncovered by another Jesuit, Hunter Guthrie, and specifically related to Heidegger's phenomenology of care (called "disquietude" by Guthrie). Unfortunately, Guthrie's study (a Sorbonne dissertation published in French) has never been available in English, and Guthrie's appendix to the existential theories of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Rousselot, is known to very few. His *Introduction au problème de l'histoire de la philosophie*<sup>1</sup> was the first exposition of the parallelism of scholastic existentialism and Heidegger's phenomenology. Guthrie's existential thesis came out of puzzlement over the

multiplicity of philosophies. He asked himself how philosophers could differ so widely, if, as one has to admit, the real world was the same for each and human reason equally competent for truth. The cause of diversity, he concluded, must lie in the very individuality of each philosopher. He decided, therefore, to look into the problem of human individuality and try to discover the root of the conceptual divergence.

From the outset Guthrie had observed that "the history of Western philosophy presents a striking phenomenon: since its first memories, from the time of Plato and Aristotle, men have exercised their ingenuity in fashioning a philosophy of *essence*. Through the centuries, essential man (never existential man) has been studied, analyzed, dissected, and afterwards reconstructed in the domain of thought." "Ideal man has taken the place of real man. So most of the conclusions of the history of philosophy bear on a being which does not exist at all." "These conclusions, placed beside living and tumultuous reality, presented the curious but futile spectacle of a portrait of man taking the place of man himself. It only lacks life." "It is only at the arrival of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard [Jaspers' observation] that a philosophy of existence makes its appearance and inaugurates a new era of thought."

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By what means can one "envisage the phenomenon of existence"? Can we look for it in ourselves? There are obvious obstacles. Perfect self-reflection by its very nature is qualitative, and, therefore, a product of the essential and not the existential pole of reality. We know existence indirectly and by inferring the principle of actualization of the essence we know directly, in abstraction from existence. Nonetheless, even this way of envisaging existence as the original reality would make sense if existence has produced in consciousness "repercussions whose traces one can follow up to their source." "The very activity of thought is a manifestation of this reality." "In other words we ought to look for an activity which may be a prolongation of the activity of existence across the different layers of the human structure; an activity produced directly from the warmth and turbulence of existence, and analysis of which would give us a secret vision of the true personal reality."

Such an activity ("constant and vital") is disquietude (Heidegger's *Sorge*). "This sentiment not only crosses the conscious stages but goes beyond to the preconscious activity." Life itself is defined by restlessness, and religion grows out of man's understanding of the seriousness of his condition. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" (Psalm 42). "For thou hast made

us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee" (Augustine). "My mind is disquieted. I am disquieted is better." "Description of man: dependency, desire of independence, need. Condition of man: inconstancy, weariness, unrest" (Pascal).

Disquietude or restlessness has two movements, centripetal and centrifugal. One is concentrated in man himself; the other leaves and surpasses man. The inward movement refers to the selfish *me* of human potentiality; the outward movement is characterized by an absence of limitation and complete freedom. On the one hand, every man looks for "absolutes";<sup>2</sup> on the other, he develops himself. On the one hand, a man pursues stability and evades relativism. This is the nostalgia for existence which every existentialist tries to express. On the other hand, the same man struggles to make something of himself and shuns the temptation to wallow in pipe dreams. "By the strangest of paradoxes, thanks to this *élan* towards an Exterior, I am in a position—in the subsequent essential movement—to fall back on myself and look for the personal goal of the fullness of *me*." Only this first movement of personal existence renders possible the second movement of the personal essence.

Between both movements there is tension corresponding to "the completely *open* tension between essence and existence; essence as inward process es-



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entially within existence, and yet never as complete essence, essentially over or above existence, essence in-over existence."<sup>3</sup> This tension, as Przywara points out, lies between the "self-containedness (immanence)" of man's nature and his "orientation upon a being independent of its consciousness (transcendence)." Man as "a unity of tensions is essentially 'open upwards,' unlimited and uncompleted." The *ratio existentiae entis* vies with the *ratio essentiae entis* for man's soul. But how are they joined?

Existence is contentless; content comes from essence. Essence expresses *what* a thing or person is; existence signifies *that* he is. Essence stands for a limited concept (horse, toy, anemone), and the existent thing is thus limited also, finitized. Conscious realization of this fact gives rise to the movement away from limited existence to the "existent ground of all being" (D'Arcy). The soul hangs on the word of the prophet, the holy one.

There are three things to be recognized about the existent person. First, he is himself and no one else, and his very behavior "countersigns every thought and act with its individual name."<sup>4</sup> Secondly, he himself is a man, whose nature overlays his individuality, but whose personality comprises a particular human being working within the limits of his human potentiality. The self can only see itself as human, and, there-

fore, sharing its humanity with others. "So identified with this nature is it that it takes for granted that its perfection consists in making itself a perfect instance of this nature." Thirdly, the self, human as it is, is existent. "As existent the self is positively incommunicable. . . This aloneness is an ontological experience." Existence is "the secret mark of human beings, their creatureliness, the frail-as-gossamer hold on our nature. We are hangers on, courtiers of the Absolute; we can be unmade as quickly as we are made."

Guthrie develops his thesis along the three levels of polarity: the ontic, the somatic, and the psychic, with emphasis on the latter two. He particularly remarks on the triple dynamism corresponding to and yet running through each: the *entelethic* or *rhythmic me* (ontic), the *energetic me* (somatic), and the *potential me* (psychic). This triplicity is present at all times on all three levels, and Guthrie makes a point of stressing that the very unity of the soul is maintained by the entelethic (dialectic) synthesis of energy and potency.

In order to see just what this means, we must think once again about the movements of life and consciousness. Life and consciousness both move in one direction or another, for one reason or another. Or to put it another way, there is one and only one self-moving

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(*automobile*) in a human being, and this movement causes other movements. (Compare Freud's *id* which vitalizes the *ego* and *super-ego*.) The source of our acts is single and is the basic self, free and originating; but this self pushes its potentialities to the utmost, and the resulting cares and concerns, the disquietude of human nature, appear as separate motions, or at least as other than the "energetic" one. As living (existent) we move our essence from potency to act, and the observable development of our nature (essence) is our most apparent operation. In fact, our energy, self, and movement are one but manifold, and it is the manifold aspects emerging from our essence which Rousselot, Guthrie, and D'Arcy call our "essential love." Strictly speaking, love, like the lover, is single. The "actual" unity of the two aspects is what Guthrie means by the "entelechiic me."

Guthrie tries to show a priority of will over intellect corresponding to this entelechiic priority of energetic over potential, existence over essence. The fact of the matter is that the soul is movement as well as mind, and its movement is mental in the broadest sense (conscious and unconscious). But the "as well as" is expressed sometimes as a contrast of will and reason. Will as tending is directed towards the end of the movement, with thought intuiting and specifying the end. But just as *nihil volitum nisi prae-*

*cognitum* and *nihil cogitum nisi praevolitum*, so the will has its eyes<sup>5</sup> and thought its verve. And yet the polarity that is still more elemental than that between intellect and will—since the former in a sense is the form to the matter of the latter—is that polarity between different kinds of willing and different kinds of knowing, in short, between different kinds of caring. Will and intellect are always complementary on a psychic or a somatic plane, and will, strictly speaking, does not “see” existence (Guthrie’s confusion). To speak, as Guthrie does, of “the intentional activity of the will,” is to make nonsense of the useful and simple distinction between will and intellect. For the will is not aware of anything. The whole mind is aware, and its tending aspect is what is meant by will, its beholding aspect what is meant by knowing.

There is no conflict between intellect and will, nor is there any reason for speaking of one as prior to the other in time; they are indissolubly bound together at any level of the soul. The energetic pole is not the same as the will, and the potential pole is not the same as the intellect. Each pole represents a complex activity, each defined by the dominance of one faculty and characterized by the purpose of its operation. These poles even have their counterparts in extreme types of people: pedants, busybodies, sensualists. And as Guthrie realized, the philosophies of great men are

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just as subject to the predispositions of any one of those poles as are the personal characteristics of one's neighbors. But regardless of predispositions to one pole or another, and regardless of any natural priority of the existential over the essential pole, every man is free to recognize or not the full claims of his human nature.

The will has a priority of its own, and so does the intellect, the will as starting, unifying, and sustaining; the intellect as kindling the light of the apprehended form. Guthrie credits the will with being the sense of the real and sense of the divine, and chides Rousselot for crediting this priority to the intelligence. In this he has misunderstood Rousselot's fuller meaning of the word "intelligence," and Guthrie like Nietzsche has needlessly confused the discussion of the two poles by trying to identify will with intellect. In fact, Guthrie has substituted the word "will" for the word "intelligence" in Rousselot's famous formula; and just as Rousselot wished to emphasize (against Bergsonian voluntarism) the characteristic possessive nature of love, reason, and consciousness as a whole, so Guthrie has wished to emphasize the basically intensive character of awareness as a whole. It is clear that both Rousselot and Guthrie were attempting to define the existential-essential dynamism of the self, and were talking about the same thing,

despite their terminological opposition. The correct distinction between will and intellect is not that the will sees something as being and that the intellect sees a being as something, but rather that the will is the intention (unconscious) of the mind and the intellect is the mind's apprehension (conscious); the mind can be conscious of its intention; the mind apprehends its object both as being and as some kind of being.

This distinction can be successfully applied to the crucial problem of the preparation for union with God. There the question is whether it is more noble to love God or to know God. But what does such an alternative mean? If it is a way of asking whether it is better to direct oneself passionately toward God or to view—passionately also—the negative knowledge (by remotion) which we have of God in this life, the answer is obvious: we should proceed from negative knowledge directly to God. But neither alternative is what man really wants. Man really desires *union* with God, that is, he desires a full act of love (or "intelligence") on his part and on God's part. Such an act involves on man's part the coördination of will, intellect, and feeling. Love is not to be confused with any of its parts, but is to be taken as the most unified act of the whole man: desiring, beholding, enjoying.

Intensity of love is always characterized by inten-

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siveness of understanding—only we call it wisdom (and folly, if love is truly blind). The deeper the love, the deeper the sense of understanding. "Love makes one see." How then is love different from any other act of the mind? Probably the difference is one of the degree of intensity of care for the person concerned. It is only in so far as we find the other person inexhaustibly worth caring for that we love him. Because of this, and strictly speaking, we can only love persons, for persons alone, as spiritual, are inexhaustible. But if the splendor of God shines through nature (cf. G. M. Hopkins), we can admire all nature too, and feel our hearts warm at the beauty of things. We love old familiar scenes and things of the earth. The perfection of natural form—not exceeded by the beauty of art—reminds us of the ideal which we have within ourselves to fulfill. In this enjoying we are using things, and for our eternal good.<sup>6</sup> What we can "see through," including persons, bores us, and we deal with such things and persons only by extra effort. An act of love requires no series of willings as do other acts; an act of love is a continuous, spontaneous movement with which we commence living as children. We do not work ourselves up to a powerful love; it comes of itself.

In loving I know whom I love, and I rejoice in that knowledge. The unity of mind is nowhere better

demonstrated than in this fascinating phenomenon. Love desires possession and union, but in order to desire one must have a preliminary vision (possession) of the beloved. The well-known difference between a "happy love" and an "unhappy love" lies not in frustration of some union but frustration of enough union. In like manner, man's innate and too casual search for God, once taken seriously, may bear a foretaste of final happiness through faith in the divine promises. "When God revealed himself as love, the last fear was removed from man's heart" (D'Arcy).

Religion makes no sense without interiorization; religion without inwardness is a sham or a blind. But inwardness is itself not exclusively intellectual, passionate, or emotional. One kind of conversion may be as crippling as another. True conversion is of the full "mind and heart of love," and only in love is God's presence realized in any degree. Pascal was probably thinking of this—despite the contradiction in words—when he said, "It is the heart which experiences God and not the reason."

The *existential love* of existing-self moves the *essential love* of self-realization, and both poles are united as branched tines in the fork of the whole soul's self-realizing love for the originator of its existence. The love for God is an act of the whole



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man—like the love for *any person*—reflecting back on love of self and all created nature, being formed by the continuous movement of a “pre-hending” or pretending will. “And this is the happy life, to rejoice concerning thee unto thee, and for thy sake: this is the happy life, and there is no other” (Augustine). “Happiness is essentially that knowledge of God the possession of which leaves no knowledge to be desired of anything knowable” (Thomas). The contemplative activity of man’s soul is a “combined operation” of desire, vision, and joy. This “intellectual substance,” man, has as his highest activity (and happiness) a knowing joy, a joyous knowing. If in loving God, the mind is seized by God, not God by the mind, man’s being will respond in ecstatic beholding.

But whether God exists or not, “that would change nothing” (Sartre), for the basic existential position is the same for the unbeliever as well as for the believer. In every man there is a nostalgia for existence veiled by nostalgia for his own past and anticipation of the future. In a sense, we are all exiles; we want to return to what is most familiar of all, the being each of us desires to be. We want to recognize (know again) and be recognized. We want to close the fissure within ourselves, between what we have been and what we are to be, between act and potency. This is that desire

of God of which both Sartre and Rousselot speak—although each in a different mood. We are empty and want to be filled; the more we live the more completely we become ourselves. And yet in the end we are as far away as at the beginning from the goal of that natural desire, *the being*. Without supernatural assistance man is a useless passion, and the only consistent nonreligious position is an adventurous stoicism. While existential analysis can point out the dynamics, it cannot guarantee the goal. The great human hunger for existence appears hopeless; existence as we know it is short and single; it can neither be repeated nor prolonged. The believer is to be envied.

Poets and novelists strain to capture and crystallize their own nostalgia for existence, under the guise of apprehensions, sensibilities, and memories. Experience, that "immense sensibility, that huge spider-web," as Henry James called it, is essentially nostalgic. What we possess is what we are, and yet even that flits away or is set aside. With a glance over the shoulder we recall the feeling for existence we rarely have in the present, and we stride into a questioning future. Our deepest certainties are renewed in compassion and love, whether out of happiness or pain, and even these certainties may have hollow centers. We know nothing that abides forever. At the end

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as in the beginning we have the impression of looking out of windows of our bodies at ourselves and the world, separate souls, existing once for all time. But the surprise and wonder we experience as we gaze out on ourselves somehow guarantees the urgent dynamism which we are never without, although ordinarily taken for granted. That this consciousness of the self will itself cease to be is both frightening and incredible; and yet we recognize its authenticity, frail though it may be. And though it may be fanciful (and it probably is not) to speak of "existential music," we give assent to the rhythm of existence within us: it is our love for life, and we realize it.

We are defined by our anxieties. We squirm beneath the elastic mold imposed by our nature. We plan with a time limit, death, the frame of our freedom: freedom, both ends and means; freedom, the first fact for which we are responsible; the freedom to recognize and love whatever is true and good (even God); the freedom that is indistinguishable from certainty. As thinking beings we are essentially concerned with truth, and truth is good for us: it will make and keep us free. It was Augustine, the first existential philosopher, who taught us that when we know for the first time that something is true, we know it as something familiar. Certainty is a kind of homecoming.

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## APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX

### NIETZSCHE'S TRAGIC SENSE OF LIFE

*Only as an aesthetic phenomenon may existence and the world appear justified.* Nietzsche

Existentialism is clearly a manifestation of much of the anxiety exhibited by nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists and intellectuals who are not usually labeled existentialists. One is continually coming across the authentic flavor of existentialism in painting and music, movies and novels, poetry and persons; if we had nothing else to do, we might spend a scholarly life designing tests for the presence of existentialism in many of the works of the past century. As a sample of what such an application of the existential theory to one book would be, I offer the following analysis of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard<sup>1</sup> revolted against the inversions of a watered-down morality and the

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unreal pretensions of abstract speculation. They shared as well a preoccupation with the basic features of human nature. So much is known. What is not as a rule remarked on is that Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian "artistic energies" are counterparts of Kierkegaard's antinomy of existence and speculation. The polarity represented by the two Greek deities stands for the polarity of existence-essence which forms the root and both branches of Kierkegaard's life view.

There are two complementary "art impulses of human nature," the Dionysian and the Apollonian, represented in Greek art by music and sculpture, and in life in general by "self-forgetfulness" and the *principium individuationis*. Nietzsche's comment that Greek tragic drama must be understood in these terms need not be gone into here, for he makes a more concrete claim: namely, that human nature itself is to be understood in terms of these diverse but interdependent energies and their cultural inversions.

The Dionysian urge is emotional and may be represented by the drunken ecstasy of the wine god; it strives for a release from the "terror and absurdity of existence," and towards a "mystic feeling of oneness." The terrifying awareness of contingency gives rise to this "longing for release" from death and suffering; the end of man is to attain an "eternal joy of

existence," and "universal harmony" as a member of a higher community." Dionysos stands for what Nietzsche (following Schopenhauer) called the will, and which he thought of as the substrate energy of human nature. There are in fact two elemental energies in human life, and even though the will is called the substratum, one should not confuse this Nietzschean dynamic polarity with the merely epistemological polarity of will and intellect. Perhaps it would be more precise to speak, as Nietzsche himself does, of the "artistic dual impulse of nature." But if it is one impulse, it is at least forked, with its tines pointing in more than one direction.

The Apollonian urge is not emotional but contemplative. It subsists on dreams, fantasy, and abstractions. It stands for the artistic release of all man's potentialities and self-developing impulses. It is interpretative and aesthetic. Its release is that of an artist, "from the nausea of the absurd" (compare Sartre and Camus). It strives towards appearance, beauty, forms. It categorizes and lays down precepts. Apollo is even an "ethical deity," and represents contemplation as well as prophecy.

These two energies, although complementary, tend to split, revealing "the eternal wound of existence,"<sup>2</sup> and in splitting they make their own inversions. Dionysos becomes drunken, bestial, sheerly emotion-



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al. Apollo becomes shallow, pompous, and unreal. And there arises an "eternal conflict between the theoretic and the tragic world-view," a conflict between genuine energies and their inversions. Nietzsche ranted against these inversions all his life, and as a consequence may have had to sacrifice his originally clear perception of the "necessary interdependence" of Dionysos and Apollo in his hatred of the Apollonian inversions in particular. The "theoretic" as against the tragic sense of life meant to him "the belief in the explicability of nature and in knowledge as a panacea." In this view Nietzsche like Kierkegaard was violently anti-Hegelian. He practiced in his own way the Husserlian precept "to the things themselves!" Yet he felt that "individuation [was] the prime cause of evil," and that the individual's tragic task was to strive for un-individuated being. In this he is like many mystics, and, despite his lack of the Stoic calm, like the Stoics who wished to find the universal within them by ignoring their contingent selves. The more profound existential theory is that of the contingent self thrusting forward toward un-individuated being, the creature making for the Creator. Nietzsche was, therefore, religious by inclination, and it is not clear whether he really shared with the mystics their occasional failure to realize that once given individuated, contingent fact, man cannot transform his nature

to become what he is not. Man must take the consequences of his nature; even from the Stoic point of view, the ethical task consists in total realization and total acceptance.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche, with less violence and probably with more perception than he had in his later years, observed, "Dionysos speaks the language of Apollo; Apollo, however, finally speaks the language of Dionysos." The *élan vital* can be expressed nobly and serenely—and with understanding. "The Dionysian substratum of the world" is the basis for the Apollonian *principium individuationis*. Man as contingent and existent receives the actual individuation of his species. Without the fact of isolated, suffering, partial being, man as man in any sense cannot be at all. This is the tragedy of human life, that individuation derives from the essential fullness of existence, and must be put up with.



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## NOTES

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### I: THE PROBLEM

<sup>1</sup>Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J. Crawford Flitch (London: Macmillan and Co., 1931), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Compare Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Clifton Fadiman, in *Basic Works of Nietzsche* (Modern Library edition), pp. 1029-1031.

<sup>3</sup>In the classical-medieval anthropologies, man as contingent and material is unknowable; man as human is knowable. The question remains as to whether man is not aware of himself in some manner as contingent, material, free, personal, and whether an understanding of this awareness is not part of the science of his being.

<sup>4</sup>"The *problem* is something which one encounters, which bars the route. It is entirely before one. The *mystery* on the contrary is something in which I am engaged, whose essence is consequently not entirely before me" (*Etre et avoir*, Paris: F. Aubier, 1935, p. 145).

<sup>5</sup>Sartre uses this distinction in *L'Etre et le néant*.

<sup>6</sup>Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*, trans. Frederick Blossom, in *Remembrance of Things Past* (2 vols.; New York: Random House, Inc., 1934), II, 1001.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1013.

### II: THE EXPERIENCE

<sup>1</sup>*Existentialism*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>The formula, existence precedes essence, is employed by Heideg-

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ger, Sartre, Guthrie, and D'Arcy to indicate the basic principle common to all existentialists. Although the words "existence" and "essence" are ancient philosophical terms, and although all philosophies stemming from Aristotle make much of the real distinction of existence-essence, this formula is peculiar to existentialism alone. There should be no ambiguity on this point: in Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics existence is not—unqualifiedly—prior to essence. In God, to be is his essence, and there is no distinction to be drawn, consequently no priority. In all created beings, the existence of which depends on God, to be is not their essence. Accordingly, a distinction can be drawn between that which makes a created being what it is, its essence or nature (including its individuality), and that which makes a "possible essence," real or actual, namely, its existence. In the order of causation, not time, the essence of something is prior to its existence, as that which is possible precedes the same thing as actual. In the order of perfection, existence is prior to essence, as being or act is prior to nonbeing or potency. The existentialist's priority of existence over essence refers to the order of perfection. To an existing person it does not matter that in the order of creation his essence preceded his existence. What does matter—and in this lies the principle of value for human life—is that now that he does exist, as an existing essence, he strives to maintain and perfect himself, to make himself more and more real. The existentialist's antagonism to scholasticism can now be fairly stated. Scholasticism, new and old, is on the whole more occupied with the order of causation than with the order of the perfection of being. Consequently, scholastic morals are more rigid and remote, less real, than one has the right to expect from a Christian morality.

<sup>3</sup>A. J. Ayer, "Jean-Paul Sartre," *Horizon*, July and August 1945.

<sup>4</sup>Guido de Ruggiero, *Existentialism*, trans. E. M. Cocks (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>"The Root of the Chestnut Tree," a chapter from the novel *La*

*Nausée*, trans. Frances A. Lippman (*Partisan Review*, Winter 1946).

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Rudolf Allers, "The Cognitive Aspect of the Emotions," *The Thomist*, October 1942.

<sup>7</sup>*The Stranger*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1946), pp. 151-52, 153.

<sup>8</sup>"The Flies," in *No Exit and The Flies*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947), p. 158.

<sup>9</sup>Ll. 5-8 of poem No. 34, a sonnet beginning "As kingfishers catch fire . . ." in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1930).

<sup>10</sup>"We Write for our own Time," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 1947.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie*, Vol. II: *Existenzerhellung*.

### III: THE DIALECTIC

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Kierkegaard in this chapter are taken from *Either/Or*, II, or from *Unscientific Postscript*.

<sup>2</sup>Although he does not express himself unequivocally on this subject, it is not fair to conclude that Kierkegaard's emphasis on human contingency is inconsistent with his Kantian insistence on a universal ethical imperative. For the truth is rather that the existential self is satisfied only in so far as it is fulfilling the common ideals of its human nature. One of these common moral ideals is precisely that every man should in friendship and justice care for the unique as well as the common needs of others.

<sup>3</sup>Man does have a "concept of existence"; that is, he is aware of the distinction between *what* he is and *that* he is. But there can be no concept of *my* existence, only of anyone's existence. I feel my existence: I do not conceive it. *What* it is I am aware of only as I infer that it is what any person's existence is.

<sup>4</sup>*Unscientific Postscript*, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup>Kierkegaard's ladder of decision—stages on life's way—contains only three widely spaced rungs: the aesthetical, the ethical, and the religious. But a person must move from rung to rung by



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the help of intermediary rungs: between the aesthetical and the ethical, irony; between the ethical and the religious, humor. Irony is a sign of an immensely widened awareness which yet needs to be veiled from the temptation of spoiling one's achievement; humor is a sign of a self-assured person who is now able to understand or put up with life's antinomies.

<sup>6</sup>Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 17.

### IV: ONTOLOGICAL NIHILISM

<sup>1</sup>Quotations in this chapter are taken from the following books by Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*.

<sup>2</sup>The difficulty of translating Heidegger is not to be compared to the difficulty of translating James Joyce. It can and should be done.

<sup>3</sup>Quotations in this paragraph are from Edmund Husserl's comprehensive article, "Phenomenology," in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edition.

<sup>4</sup>Compare Bergson's similar view in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

<sup>5</sup>Let readers of Heidegger be warned that he sometimes twists and alters the usual scholastic distinction of existence-essence to emphasize the active, potential nature of man against the brute fact of actuality. Whereas for scholasticism essence stands for the potential nature and existence for the mere fact of actualization of the nature, for Heidegger existence stands for the growth and change of man, and essence becomes meaningless (and therefore easily identifiable with existence). For the medieval distinction of existence-essence, Heidegger substitutes his own and similar distinction of being-existence.

<sup>6</sup>At other times Heidegger uses "existence" simply to express man's nature as a whole, and then means: man is an active, emerging, evolving, planning, making, choosing, caring, time-worn being. But he himself retains the essence-existence distinc-

tion in order to explain his own distinction of being-existence.

<sup>7</sup>*Sein und Zeit*, p. 42. Here and in some other places he employs the scholastic distinction of existence-essence.

<sup>8</sup>*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, p. 214.

<sup>9</sup>*Sein und Zeit*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>"What do I fear from it? Is it physical pain, the pain of the last sigh? No; what I fear is rather that it is something which does not exist, which can only be expressed by the symbol" (François Mauriac, *Vipers' Tangle*, trans. W. B. Wells [London: V. Gollancz, Ltd., 1933], p. 89). See also Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*.

<sup>11</sup>"Time is the product of changing realities, beings, existences. Time can therefore be transcended. The degraded time of our world is the outcome of the Fall that occurred in the depths of existence . . . Time has a dual significance for human existence: on the one hand it is the outcome of creative activity; on the other, as the product of disruption and disintegration, it is synonymous with fear and anxiety" (Nikolai Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, trans. George Reavey [London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1938], p. 130).

#### V: THE NEW HUMANISM

<sup>1</sup>Quotations from Sartre's writings are from *L'Etre et le néant* and *Existentialism*.

<sup>2</sup>"An Existentialist Looks at America," *New York Times Magazine*, May 25, 1947.

<sup>3</sup>"Pyrrhus and Cyneas," trans. Christopher Freemantle, *Partisan Review*, Summer 1946.

<sup>4</sup>Compare Gabriel Marcel's *Etre et avoir*.

#### VI: INTERIORIZED SCHOLASTICISM

<sup>1</sup>Compare Berdyaev's remark, "Sex is one of the chief causes of human solitude. Man is a sexual being, that is half a being, divided and incomplete" (*Solitude and Society*, p. 118). One might amend this by saying: Sex is one of the chief symptoms of human solitude, etc.

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<sup>2</sup>Although it may be presumptuous to expect a comparison of existentialism and psychoanalysis to clarify the meaning of psychoanalytic theory itself, just as it is undoubtedly presumptuous of Sartre to look forward to an "existential psychoanalysis," a comparison would at least serve to put one in relief against the other and assist literary critics and the general reader in departing from their present uncritical acceptance of psychoanalytic notions and jargon.

<sup>3</sup>In this way one finds Thomas' view of love and intellect consonant with the theory of caring developed here. For an illuminating summary of Thomas on this question, see M. C. D'Arcy's *The Mind and Heart of Love* (London), p. 304.

<sup>4</sup>For a clear exposition of the Thomist theory of individuation, see Gilson's *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 200; or Jacques Maritain's *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), chapter iii.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Lafcadio Hearn's story of the faceless man, *Mujina*.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-I,q.3,a.3.

<sup>7</sup>*Summa Theologica*, I-I,q.54,a.3.

<sup>8</sup>*In omni ente creato existentia est actus per essentiam actualem limitatus, or Essentia creaturae est limitatio creaturae. Vi essentiae suae creatura ad perfectiones suae speciei realiter limitatur. Essentia est ordo ad has perfectiones* (Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae*, II [Freiburg: Herder, 1937], 107).

<sup>9</sup>One cannot excuse St. Thomas for this omission by saying that being as existent is being as material and therefore unknowable. The material principle is not a synonym for the existential principle, even in man.

<sup>10</sup>D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love*, p. 304.

<sup>11</sup>*Pour le problème de l'amour au moyen âge* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1908), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>"Métaphysique thomiste et critique de la connaissance," p.

504. This is the clearest Thomistic statement of the psychic dynamism of existentialism and essentialism; it is the main piece of evidence for the existential parallelism of Rousselot and his inheritors on the one hand and Kierkegaard and his followers on the other. Compare also Sartre's definition of the two desires, pages 105-6 above; and Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1948), pp. 83, 132.

#### VII: THE NOSTALGIA FOR EXISTENCE

<sup>1</sup>Subtitled: *La Métaphysique de l'individualité a priori de la pensée.*

<sup>2</sup>Compare Sartre's: "There is in every heart . . . a hunger for the absolute" ("We Write for our own Time"). Rousselot and other Christians would, of course, call Sartre's "absolutes" real substitutes for the more real absolute which awaits the believer. Both Rousselot and Sartre, however, are talking about the same desire in man.

<sup>3</sup>Erich Przywara, *Polarity*, trans. A. C. Bouquet (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Quotations in this paragraph are from D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love*, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup>Rousselot's "Affection gives eyes to knowing; love makes one see."

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Augustine's distinction of enjoying and using in his *On Christian Doctrine*.

#### APPENDIX

<sup>1</sup>Although Nietzsche was encouraged by friends to read Kierkegaard, he never got around to doing so.

<sup>2</sup>Compare Benjamin Fondane, *L'Existence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 35.